

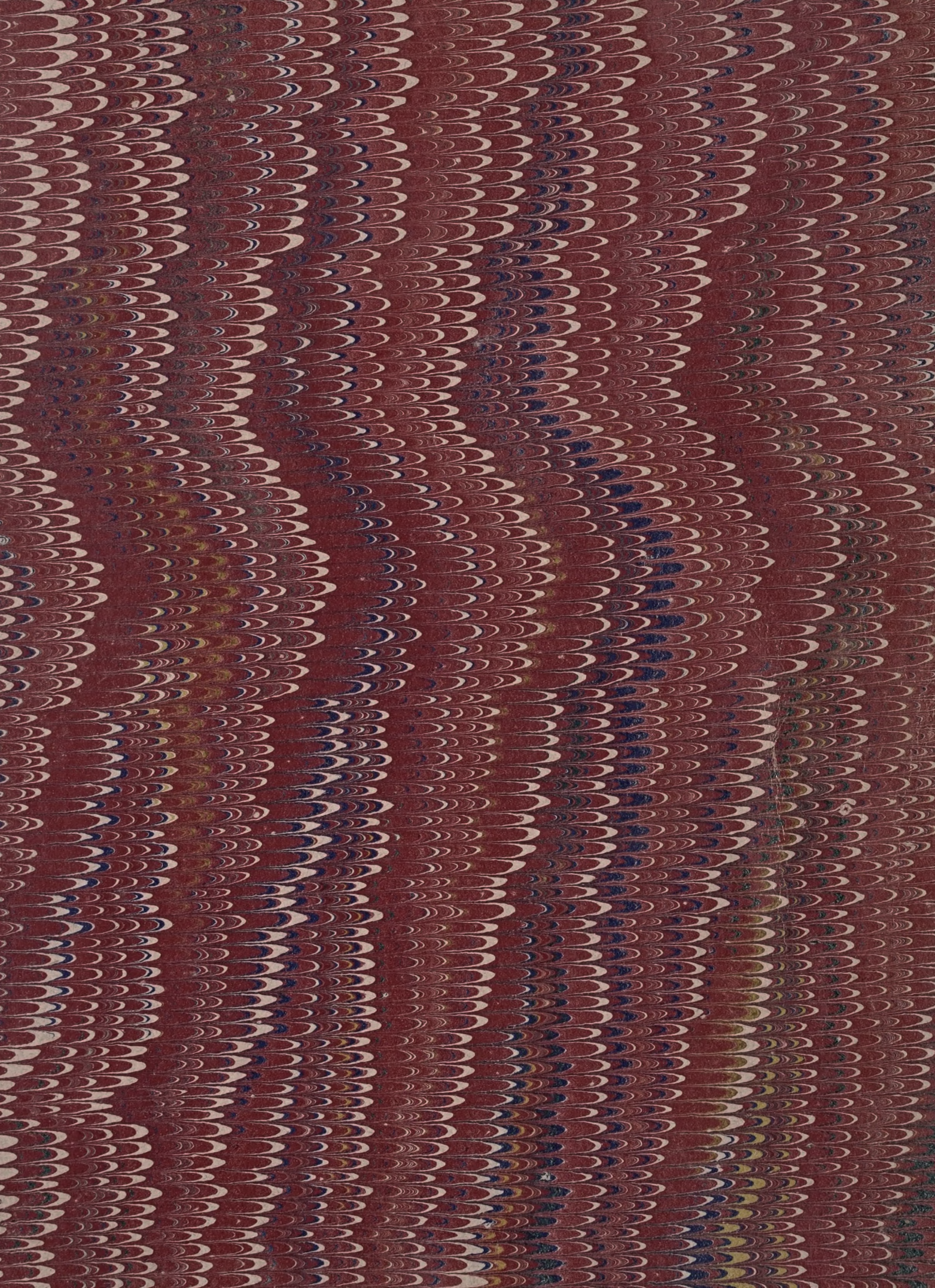


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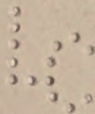
SEVEN
AUTUMN LEAVES

FROM

FAIRY LAND

Cunningham, E

Illustrated with Etchings



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PREFACE.

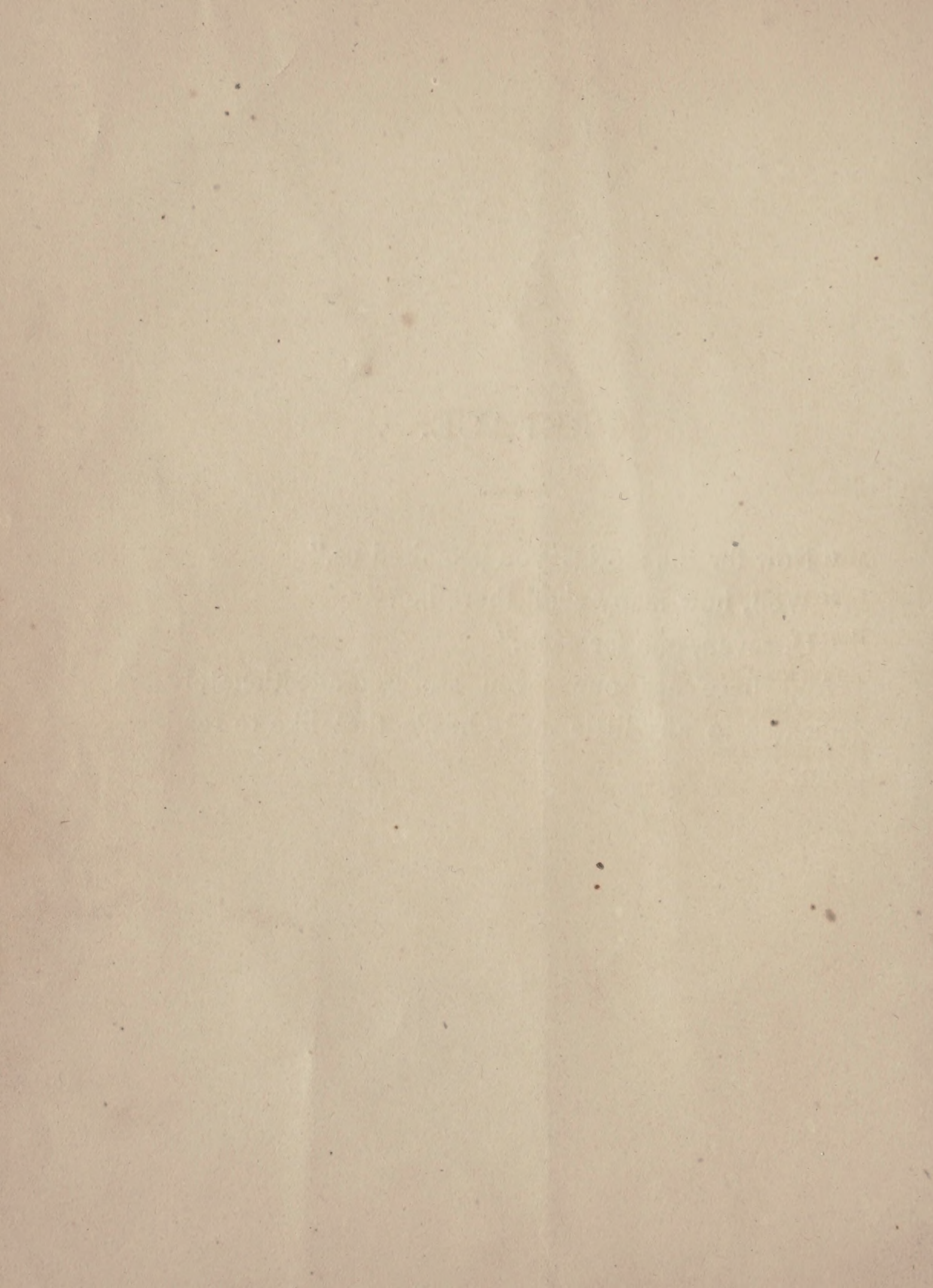


“ Now for the stories you promised us.”

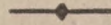
“ Well, how many shall there be ? ”

“ O, seven, one for each.”

And here are our seven stories ; affectionately dedicated to any little curly heads that like to read them.



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SEVEN AUTUMN LEAVES FROM FAIRY LAND.

THE MERMAID.

THREE little girls looked down from a balcony at Nice, on the blue and sparkling waters of the Mediterranean.

“Papa,” said they, “have mermaids ever lived in this sea?”

“No doubt,” he answered, “as much as in any sea; and now I think of it, I remember a story of one, beginning, ‘Once upon a time;’ did you ever hear it?”

“O, no,” they cried; “do tell us!”

“Well then.”

Once upon a time, within these very blue waters, there lived a little mermaid. It was long, long ago, and in these present days the sun is so very bright, and men know so much, and are so troublesome with

their questions, that the mermaids have all gone away even from this nice sea ; and you and I, if we went to look for them, would not be able to find a single one, far or near.

But at the time I speak of, there was a dear little mermaid, with golden hair and pink cheeks like coral, who lived in this sea, and her particular business was to pick up all the little children that came floating along, and take care of them, and make them grow up into little mermen and maids.

One day, as she sat on the yellow rocks just above the sea-foam, combing her long hair with a coarse-toothed comb that took out the tangles without hurting her too much, she saw something white on the water a long way off.

“ I wonder if it is a baby ? ” she thought. She sat yet a little, and then it looked like a wreath of seaweed. But she looked again, and it was like a shell, and at last she saw clearly that it was a shell with something in it. So she stuck her comb in a crack in the rock, and swam off.

When she came to it, sure enough it was a shell, the shell of a great turtle ; and in the shell, which was flat and broad like a soup plate, was the loveliest little



boy baby the mermaid had ever seen, lying asleep, wrapped in a blue mantle with silver stars on it.

The mermaid was very much pleased, and she fastened the ends of her long yellow hair to the shell by two little holes she found, and swimming away with all her might, she soon towed it to the rock. Now in this rock was a cave, where the sea flowed in, making a floor of water, and then the rocks closed overhead, all except one little hole near the top, where the sun and the stars could look in. She pulled the shell into this cave, and then went for her comb which she had left on the rock, you know. Then she put a leaf on the comb, and blew, and made music, soft and sweet, till the baby awoke.

He opened a pair of the nicest blue eyes you ever saw, and smiled at the mermaid, for he liked the music and liked her pretty face too. So they became great friends, and he grew into a boy, bigger and bigger, but she never let him go out of the cave, except into a small round hollow, where the sun shone, to sun himself sometimes; and all the food she gave him was little fishes that were dried in the hot sun.

By and by, when he had got large and strong, he

wanted to go away ; but when he said so, the little mermaid shook her head and said, “ No, unless he would be a merman, and then he might go where he liked.” But he did not want to be a merman, and have a great fin growing out of the small of his back, and always live in the sea ; and so, though he loved the little mermaid very much, and, besides, did not see how he should ever get away, he always said, “ No,” in his turn.

But one day as he was sitting in the cave, and the mermaid had gone to get some dried fish, he heard a chirp-chirp. He looked up, and a small, blue bird, with a silver star on its breast, was sitting on the edge of the hole that let in the light. “ I have come for you,” said the bird.

“ How are you to get me ? ” said he.

“ Tell your mistress that you mean to be a merman, and she will have to go a thousand miles for the fin, and while she is gone you can get away.” Then the blue bird flew away, just in time ; for in came the mermaid by the water road, with the dried fish.

“ I have changed my mind, and will be a merman,” said he.

“ That is good news ; ” cried she, “ but I must go

a thousand miles to get your fin, and mind nothing happens to you while I am gone, or I shall break my heart."

She dove into the water, and for a moment he saw the golden gleam of her yellow hair, and then she was gone.

In flew the blue bird again, for, though hidden, she was all the time watching.

"Come," said she, "no time to lose; climb out, climb out!" But the sides of the cave were steep and high, and though the young man tried hard, and was active and strong, he never would have got up, if the bird had not floated down to him a little blue feather from one of its wings. "Put it under your chin," said she, "and it will hold you up." And so it did, and he reached the free air at last.

Everything looked very beautiful to him, coming out of the dark cave. Such a great, wide ocean! such lovely, soft clouds! such a glorious, far-reaching sun! and he felt very impatient to leave the bare rocks, and go away. But how was he to float on the water? He was not a merman yet, and could not live in the sea, nor could he fly.

But the clever bird helped him. "Do you see

that big shell?" she said; "you must make a boat of that." In truth, it was the very turtle-shell that he had floated in as a little baby, though he did not know it, having never seen it since. It was too small to bear his great weight, now that he was a man, but with the bird to show him, he soon found two logs that the waves had thrown on the rocks, and he bound the shell on the top, and made a very nice float.

But just as they were ready to start, he bethought himself of his good friend, the mermaid, and what she had said about breaking her heart if she found, when she came back, that anything had happened to him.

He stepped upon the rocks again, and said he could not go after all.

Now, I dare say, you have already seen through the little blue bird, and know, out of your own heads, that she was a fairy in disguise. She was a very good fairy, and she was glad to see that the young man was true-hearted, for she knew in a moment why he changed his mind.

But she wanted to try him well; so she asked, "Why not?"

"Because I love my little mermaid, and though I can never be a merman, I will not break her heart."

“Now listen,” said the bird, “and don’t be foolish. Your mother is a friend of mine, and a great queen; and you are a prince. When you were a baby you were carried off by a bad man, and nobody knew where to find you. But your mother believed you were alive, and came to me for help, for I am a fairy. And for these fifteen years I have been flying about to find you. I asked that foolish sun, and he said, yes, he had seen you, but could not remember where. I wasted three years in flying to him. Then I went to the stars, who are more clever, and I was ten years flying about among them, and at last I found one keen little star that had looked in your face through the round hole while you were sleeping, and she told me. It was my blue mantle that you were wrapped in when you were stolen and set afloat, and but for that you would have been overwhelmed by the waves. Now, after all this trouble, are you going to stay behind just for one little mermaid?”

Then the prince was very much troubled in mind, but for all that he answered, “She has been good to me and loves me, and I will not break her heart.”

The fairy was much pleased at seeing him so resolute, though she knew it would bring him into

great danger, as you will see by and by. "You can go with me," she said, "and still not lose her; for if you leave her a lock of your hair, she can find you and come to you; but if you do, you can never wear any hair again, but must cut it off even to your eyebrows and moustache, and throw it into the sea once a week. Else the mermen can catch you, and pull you into the deep water, if there is so much as one single lock to hold by."

Now the prince's hair was the most beautiful that ever man had, but he said not a word, but cut off a lock, and the bird carried it in her mouth and laid it in the cave, with a stone on it, that it might not blow away.

Then the prince got into the boat, keeping the little blue feather, and as the blue bird flew before, the boat followed on the sea behind, until the rocks disappeared from sight, the beautiful green land was reached, and he stepped on shore. O! how delightful he thought the grass and trees were, and how curious the cows and sheep, and all the animals; for he had grown up to a tall man, and had never before seen any living thing, only his little mermaid and the birds.

“Cut off your hair quickly,” said the bird, “they may be after us any moment.” He cut his hair close to his ears, and threw it into the sea, and then they went on to the great city.

When the queen saw her son she was as happy as any mother in the world, for he was very gay and handsome, and she called all her people to look at him, and made him sit on the throne with her.

The fairy however, said nothing about the mermaid, and you may be sure the prince did not, and it troubled his mother very much that he would shave his head once a week, and send the hair by a careful messenger, to be thrown into the sea.

Now as all the kings and princes of the world wore long hair, this was a sad trial to the queen, but the prince could not tell her the reason, as that would only have made the matter worse.

As you and I know all about the little mermaid, we understand the reason very well; but the queen, not knowing, could only think he was wrong in his head, or he would not do so strange a thing.

We must now go back to the mermaid. She travelled the thousand miles and back again very quickly, bringing the fin and a great number of

her friends, mermen and mermaids, to welcome the new merman. But when they came there, he was gone!

Her heart was just about to break, for she loved him very much, when she saw the lock of hair on the stone. She caught it up and kissed it, but the mermen wanted it also, saying "Now we can have him when we like, for we have got his hair."

But she held it so that no one could take it, and threw one strand up in the air, and watched the way it blew, and then she knew where he had gone. So they all swam after, but when they reached the shore, he had already shaved his head, and so was safe from them all for that time.

But in those days, if any man or woman gave the mer-people any of their hair, then, whenever a strand was sent to them, they must come down to the sea-shore wherever they were, and they must always keep their heads shaved. So by and by, when the mermaid thought she could not live any longer without seeing the prince, she sent him one of his own brown hairs to bring him to the sea-shore, charging her messenger to see that his hair was close shaved, even to his moustache and his eyebrows.

Now the queen had got herself into such a state of mind about her son's hair, that she had sent messengers all over the country, promising that if any man would cure her son of cutting his hair, his eyebrows, and his moustache, she would marry him ; and if any woman would cure him, that woman should marry the young prince himself.

The queen was rather old and plain-looking, so there was not much trouble, in consequence, from men ; but the prince being very handsome, so many women came with their cures, hoping to marry him, that he could scarcely move out of his mother's house for fear of being suffocated by the crowds of lovely creatures who were always waiting about the door. All the time, the prince did not fail to remember the little mermaid, and he had no wish to be cured.

So when he got the strand of hair, he was glad to creep quietly out of the house before daylight, when there was no one watching, and hasten down to the sea-shore. There he found the little mermaid sitting with her feet in the water, combing her hair as usual, and very glad to see him.

They told each other all their troubles, for she had hers also. Her friends were angry with her

because she had lost the prince she had taken care of so long, and also because she still liked him.

“But never mind,” said she cheerfully, “if you are afraid of nothing, I can cure you, and you can cure me, all at the same time. If you can pull the fin out of my back I can become a woman, and live with you ; and if you get back the lock of hair you gave me, your hair can safely grow again.”

“Let me try the fin,” cried he hastily.

“That would be in vain,” she answered, “for it can only be done in the deepest cavern of the sea, when I am asleep, and only there by a living man ; and, alas, the pain will be like tearing out my heart.”

“How can I give you so great pain,” he said, “and besides, how can I go there, for I cannot breathe in the water, and the mermen and great sea creatures would stop me, if I could.”

“No matter for the pain,” said she ; “and to get there, you must live on dew for three days, and I will make a rope of single strands of your hair all the way down, and as long as you hold by that and are not frightened, nobody and nothing can harm you. As for the lock of hair, I shall have it, and when once I am a woman I can give it back.”

So it was agreed, and he concealed himself for three days, and lived on dew-drops. On the morning of the fourth day, he went to the sea-shore, and there, after looking in the water awhile, he saw a thin brown thread floating, and he knew it was the strand of his hair.

He plunged in head-foremost, and, sliding his hand along the hair, which became very firm and stiff, he went deeper and deeper, far down into the blue water. Very soon all sorts of monstrous fish, and curious and awful-looking sea creatures began to press against him, and rub him with their slippery bodies, and open their wide mouths at him. But he kept a brave heart, held fast to the strand, and still descended. Then crowds of mermen pressed about him, and struck him with their strong fins, but without avail.

Still he sank, deeper — deeper — till at last he reached the deep sea cavern, and there was his dear little mermaid, lying fast asleep. He held the brown strand carefully in one hand, and then with the other, with all his might and main, he tore the fin from out her back.

O, what an awful scream she gave, as he did so,

and she awoke. He was so startled he nearly lost the strand. She caught him round the neck. "Hold me fast, and hold fast the strand," she cried, "or we are lost."

And then into the cavern rushed all the creatures that crawl on the bottom of the sea, and the fierce mermen, and such a dreadful noise and tumult arose that the young prince was glad enough to find that they were sliding quickly up the strand of hair. The water was full of angry creatures that snatched and clashed their teeth at them, but could not drag them away. They reached the top at last, and popped out into the clear sun and sweet air. On the rocks sat an old woman with pleasant, kindly eyes and silver hair; and she received the little mermaid, now no longer a mermaid, and wrapped her in a blue robe with silver stars, and threw back into the sea her sea-green dress. And the prince knew by the blue mantle that it was his fairy godmother. She looked at them kindly and sang, —

"By faith most true, and heart most bold,
He drew you from the water cold!
You have his heart! to gain his hand,
You still must learn the ways of land;
Have still to win by woman's wit,
Or by his side you'll never sit."

The old woman held out her hand ; the maiden hesitated a moment, then drew from one of her little ears the lock of hair, and gave it to the prince, looked at him with tearful eyes, took the fairy's hand, and they separated.

The prince, who knew his love was in good hands, hastened home to comfort his mother. He told her he had been bathing, and he was quite wet enough to prove it. And he sat upon the throne daily with her, and gave justice to the people.

Stella, as the fairy called her, went with the seeming old woman to a little brown house near the sea, where they lived like country people, and she learned to eat and drink properly, and to bake and brew, to spin and weave.

But the prince, though no longer in danger, still shaved his head, his eyebrows, and moustache.

One day came a maiden to the queen, wrapt in a blue robe with stars of silver, but with so thick a veil over her face that no one could see whether she was ugly or beautiful.

"O queen," she said, "I alone can cure the prince, your son."

"If you do, he shall marry you," said the queen,

“though you are as ugly as the bark of an ash tree,” for the queen was a very strong-minded woman.

Then the prince was sent for; and as soon as he saw the blue robe with silver stars, he knew more about the matter, a good deal, than the queen did.

“Kneel,” said the maiden. The prince kneeled; she touched his head with her hand, and said that in a month he would be well.

Then every one rejoiced, and the queen made a fine room ready; and the veiled maiden lived there, and learned to sew and to make button-holes, and embroider, and crotchet, and, in short, all that young women do, being as busy as a bee all day long.

And the queen saw that every day the prince's hair grew and grew, and he no longer cut it off. So she knew he was cured.

At the end of the month she ordered the most beautiful clothes that were ever seen, and having heard of Cinderella and her glass slippers, she ordered a pair of them; and she sent them all to the maiden's room.

When the morning came that they were to be married, behold, Stella appeared from the room with her face unveiled, lovely beyond telling, with her

beautiful golden hair braided in a way that was never seen in that country before ; with the glittering dress that the Queen had sent her ; and with the glass slippers on her feet.

Everybody said that of all the beautiful ladies they had ever seen, she was the most beautiful ; and nobody ever knew that she had been a mermaid, except her husband and the good fairy.

They were married before all the people, and were good and happy all their lives.

That was what happened to a Mediterranean mermaid.

“O! what a perfect dear,” sighed Mary.

“All but the fin,” said Paul.

“I mean the prince,” said Mary.

“O!” said Paul.

LITTLE HANS.

THERE lived on the borders of a Bohemian forest a little fellow named Hans. His father had been forester to the king, but was now dead; and his mother got a scant living, collecting forest herbs.

Hans, though ten years old, was so little, from hard work and lack of food, that he looked only six, and was called Little Hans. He was active and clever, and a great help to his mother, and he was the friend of everything and everybody, from the poor little field-mouse up to his important neighbor, Senzel, the wood-carrier, who owned a donkey and had a plastered house.

Once, when his mother was sick, he carried her herbs to the town of the district, under the care of Senzel; and when they had got through their business and had left the town, on their return, he saved from the gutter a poor cat that the town boys had left for dead. The unfortunate creature had been banged and drenched and stoned, till there was but an atom of life left. Affectionate little Hans care-

fully washed off the mud, bound up her broken leg, tended her wounds, and so nursed and cuddled her that he brought her round into useful condition again, and she soon cleared the widow's hut of such few rats as harbored there. The poor woman now began to have frequent attacks of illness, partly caused by exposure in gathering herbs, and partly by poor food, and they grew more and more in want as the days went on, and she was unable to make her usual collections.

Little Hans made desperate efforts to fill his mother's place as provider, but without much result. So the day came when he had to take his much loved pussy in his arms, and bid her seek her own living in the woods.

He carried her some way up the mountain that lay at their back, and telling her to be of good cheer, for that at any rate the woods were better than the town, he left her with tears, and returned home. The cat looked after him, mewling, but made no attempt to follow, being painfully conscious by two days' fast, how slim the living was with poor little Hans.

Hans now hired himself out to Senzel, and worked

eagerly from dawn till twilight. But Senzel himself barely got food for his household and donkey, and what little he could give Hans did not go far. One afternoon they were high on the side of the mountain, gathering and piling the wood of a newly cleared lot. They kept on till dark, being anxious to finish, and would have worked longer, but Hans, looking up, saw bright lights through the trees, shining high up, in a hollow of the mountain.

“What is that light?” he called to Senzel. Then Senzel looked up, and when he saw the lights, he dropped the sticks he had, and said, “Let us be gone.”

They hurried down the mountain in haste, nor stopped to get breath, till they were far down and in their usual quarter; then Hans asked the reason of their haste.

“Ah, those were the goblin charcoal burners,” said Senzel. “It is well to keep out of sight of their fires.”

Little Hans went home full of curiosity, and when his mother heard that he had seen the goblin fires, she told him all that was known about them.

They industriously collect small wood for burning,

but it is said that when they char, instead of sticks of charcoal, there come from the fires sticks of silver, which they store away against a time of want, that never comes.

“Why don’t people go to help them?” said Hans, “and get some of their nice sticks?”

“Ah,” said his mother, “so they have; but the bad side to it is, they never come back.”

That was a damper to Little Hans, whose mind was already on the silver sticks. The next day, when on the mountain, he looked eagerly up, but saw no signs of the goblins, and was obliged to go home disappointed. Every day it grew worse and worse in his mother’s hut, and it began to look like sheer starvation.

“Nothing can be worse than this for me,” thought Hans, “and as for my mother, I don’t help her as it is, and may help her a great deal, if I go to see the goblins.”

So having made her as comfortable as he could, and baked their last meal, and put the cake within her reach, he crept quietly out of the house, and began to ascend the mountain.

It was close on dusk, but still there was light

enough to see the way, and Hans hastened, that he might reach the cleared lot before it was quite dark. Just before getting there, he saw something small moving in the bushes by the path, and stopping to look, found it was a poor little hare, caught in a noose set to trap small game. She lay quite still and trembling, while Hans loosed the string. "You would do nicely for the pot," thought he, but he had never been able to kill, much less to eat, any of the little wild creatures, long as he had lived in the wood; and hungry as he was, it was only a passing thought. The hare scampered off, and in a minute more Hans stood in the clearing, looking for the lights.

As the evening darkened, suddenly he saw them, springing into full brilliancy, a dozen or more in a moment.

With his heart in his mouth, but still quite resolute to try his luck with the goblins, Hans hastened towards the fires, stumbling over roots and sticks, and scratched by thorns. They were a long way up, but at last he came close, and saw in the open grove of the hollow the charring fires of the goblins, already covered with layers of leaves and sod, the smothered flames bursting ever and anon from the sides of the

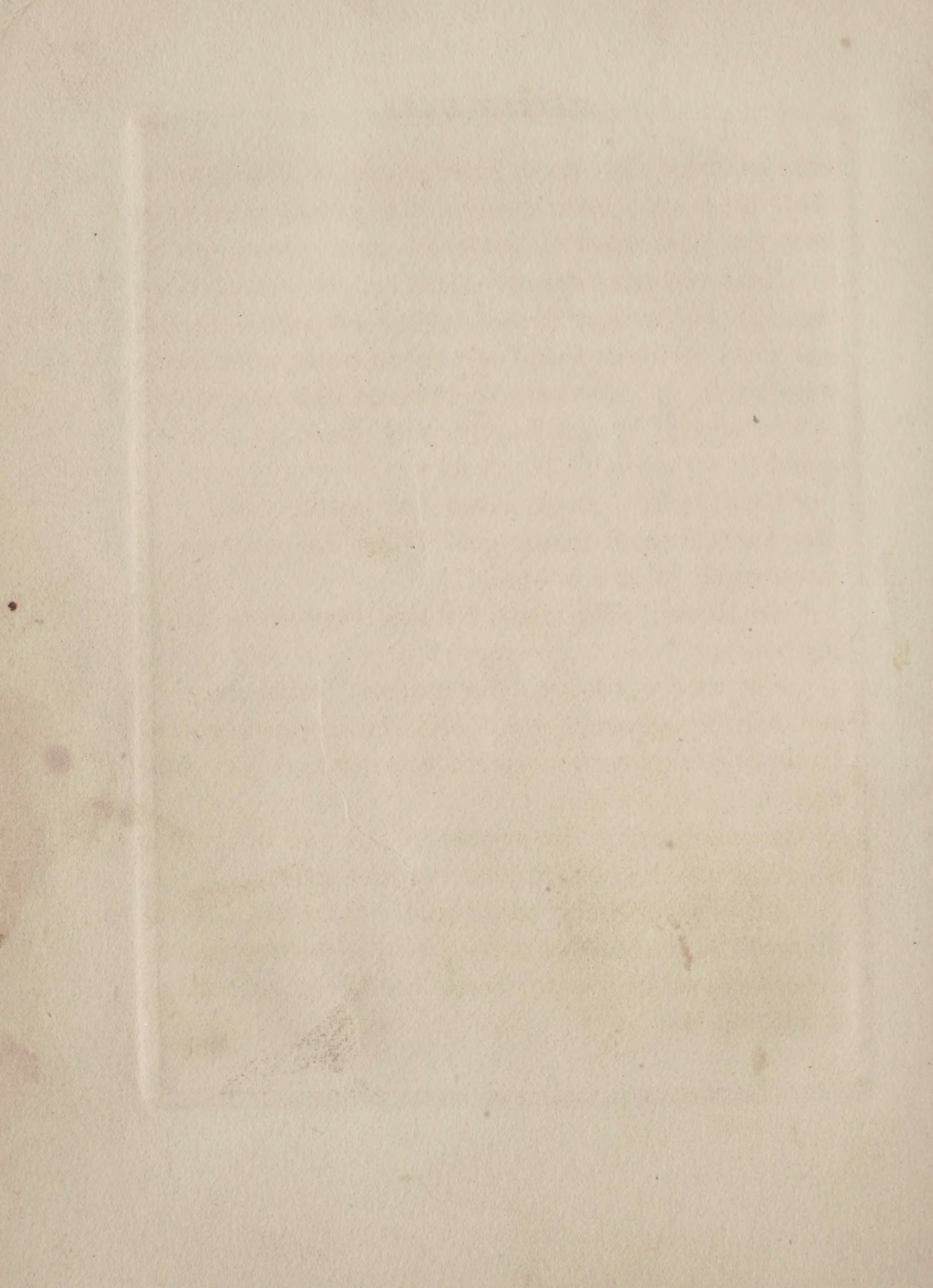
heaps. The goblins were little crooked fellows, not taller than Hans, black as soot, with large hands and feet. One of them saw him as soon as he came near, and cried, "Ho ! ho ! here is another hand to help ;" and all looked at Hans and shouted, "Ho ! ho !" and two or three ran forward to bring him in.

The welcome was not particularly friendly, and as he just then bethought himself that perhaps their way of getting rid of voluntary helpers, when they had done with them, was to stuff them into a fire, he began to think he had been rather hasty in coming.

However, there was no help for it now, so when the goblins asked what he was there for, he said he was out of work, and seeing their fires, had come to offer help. At that they laughed again, but set him to work gathering twigs and sticks, which he did with great industry, all the time thinking in his little head how he should get off without the scorching which he was pretty sure he saw before him.

The goblins brought great piles of wood and of underbrush, stirred the fires, and hurried to and fro, every now and then making their rude jokes, and laughing loudly as they passed him. When it was





time to draw the wood, Hans' curiosity nearly overcame his fears. Sure enough, the great rakes drew from the piles glowing sticks of pure silver, and so far, Hans saw the tales were true. A thought flashed through his mind. These goblins loved silver, that was plain, or they would not spend night after night working for it. Perhaps they would like gold more!

"O, silver!" said he. "Why don't you make gold?"

"Gold," they cried, clustering about him, "do you know how to make gold?" for no creature is more stupid than a goblin.

"Of course," said Hans, "it's as easy as to know my mother."

"But we don't know your mother," cried they.

"All the worse for you," said Hans, who began to feel quite easy, as he saw his way through his difficulties.

The goblins now threatened to put him in the fire if he did not show them how to make gold.

"All in good time," said Hans, "there are several things to be got, and we will do gold to-morrow night; meantime, we had better house the silver, since there is nothing else."

The goblins then treated him with some respect, and when they had got their make of silver together in great baskets, they led the way into the thickets. Hans expected them every instant to sink into the ground, or disappear in some goblin way, and as he had two small sticks of silver neatly stuck in the side of his shoe, he was perfectly satisfied to have them part company in that way when they chose. But there was no such luck for poor Hans.

They came soon to an opening in the hill-side, and to his alarm they all trooped in, with no chance of escape for him, seeing that he was in the centre. They descended for some time, passing many turnings, and finally entered a great hall, lighted dimly by a glowing ball of fire in the centre, which burned without blaze. Here, Hans could see, there were endless heaps of silver charcoal, and it was evidently their great store-house. The goblins now considered what they should do with him for the night, and finally settled to leave him there with a shell of water, and some roots to chew. This suited Hans, who did not feel comfortable in their company.

As soon as he was alone he examined the entrance, but found it closed by a great stone, too heavy to

move. The hall was of immense size, and to range about it without a guide was to lose himself, without much chance of getting anywhere. So after a few attempts, he sat down on a heap of silver, to think over his chances. By next night his brag would come to naught, and he already saw himself in imagination, pitching head foremost into a glowing bed of coals, when he felt a soft rub against his leg. He looked down in surprise, and there was a living cat, and as he looked closer, of all cats in the world, *his* cat! His delight for a moment made him forget his danger. He caught her up and caressed her, while puss was as much pleased as he. But in a moment or two, wise pussy, who had come to help, and not for caresses, leaped down, looked up for him to follow, and led the way confidently towards the gloomy recesses of the hall. Hans soon had to grope, to keep the path which lay among the heaps of silver sticks; but by and by, reaching the wall of the chamber, entered a narrow crevice, along which he passed without difficulty, as he felt the rock on each side. An occasional mew from puss showed she still led the way, and very encouraging these mews were for poor Hans. By and by the rock lowered, and Hans had to

go on hands and knees, but, confident in his guide, he did not lose heart. He was rewarded at last by feeling the fresh air of night blowing in his face, and in a moment they issued from a small hole in the hill-side into the starlight. Close by was a little hut, towards which puss went without halting, Hans following. Puss crept under a hole in the door, and Hans, pushing, found himself in a little smithy, and before him, sitting on his anvil, smoking a pipe, was the smith, a little, grimy man, but evidently not goblin. He was as much surprised at seeing Hans, as Hans was to see him, and nearly choked himself with smoke in his astonishment. As soon as he could speak, he asked him who he was, and how he came there; to which Hans answered he was a boy, and had come to serve the goblins.

“And who are you?” said Hans.

“O, I’m their smith,” said he, and looking at Hans curiously, added, “so you are all right with ’em.”

It was rather embarrassing, for he wasn’t “all right with ’em” by any means, and, being their smith, the grimy man might take the goblin view of the case, and turn him back. Hans hesitated, but his need for a friend was great, it was a man he had to



deal with, and moreover puss had led him there, so he answered, —

“No, I’m running away, and want your help! Why don’t you run, too?”

“Tell me all about it,” said the smith, “and I will tell my story in turn.”

Greatly encouraged, Hans told his story, the little man resuming his seat on the anvil, and smoking steadily.

“Well done!” said he, when the story was over; “that was a lucky thought, and saved you from the coals. Now for my story.

“I was a smith’s workman down in the town below, with small wages and hard work, and had to sleep in the cinders in the smithy. One night, as I sat looking at the red coals on the forge, a goblin came out and asked me to be their smith.

“‘What conditions?’ said I.

“‘Plenty to eat and drink,’ said he, ‘and a house to yourself.’

“‘For how long?’

“‘For good,’ said he.

“‘I can’t live under ground,’ said I.

“‘House above,’ said he.

“So then, seeing that I had never had enough to eat and drink, and wanted to see how it felt, and besides, thinking that if I could have a house outside I could get off when I chose, I agreed and came. But I made one mistake. It was easy to come, but not so easy to go, as you will find. There are snares and traps, and one can't go, and though I have had plenty to eat and drink, I am tired of the goblins, and want to go. One cold night the cat crept in here, and has been a good friend. She knows more than we do, and your only chance is to follow her lead. But where is she?”

True enough, on looking round there was no puss to be seen. But while they were wondering, she crept in under the door, rubbed herself against Hans' legs, and went out again.

“Better follow,” said the smith, “and if you get off, remember me.”

Hans followed, and when he got out, saw by the starlight that puss had strange company, no less than the timid little hare Hans had set free of the snare. The hare evidently had his instructions, and set off, closely followed by Hans, who was led through many a close and winding path, until at last he saw open-

ings occasionally through the thickets. But just as they reached clearer ground, a distant noise frightened the foolish hare, and he started at a run, obliging Hans to follow in such a hurry that he stumbled into a snare, and in a moment was fast by the leg. The hare was off, and Hans lay there forlorn enough, quite unable to get free, and only hoping he might be overlooked until chance befriended him.

Just before dawn the goblin watchman went his rounds to see that all was right, and soon came upon the path where poor Hans lay. Hans saw him first, and his good wits helping him, called out, "Here! help, help!" The watchman came running. "Take me out, fool; what does this mean?" said the audacious Hans. The watchman, being a goblin, of course was a fool and took him out, but had sense enough to ask what his honor was doing there. Before Hans could answer, there was a great buzzing in the mountain, and out rushed all the goblins in wild alarm at the escape of their gold-maker. When they saw him they were for pouncing upon him, but Hans, who had now learned the way, shouted, "Hands off, hands off!" and they held aloof while he added, "Why didn't some of you come when I called to go out?"

“What did you want to go out for?” returned they, their suspicions rising again.

“For hellebore, of course,” said Hans; “how can you make gold without hellebore? and there was I, left alone, and no one within hearing, and a crooked way to find, and this rascally trap at the end; is this the way you help your workers?”

“O, it was quite a mistake!” cried the goblins, now fully taken in by such a long word as hellebore, “we will help you to find it; let’s go at once.”

“Too late,” said Hans, “it can only be done under the star Aldebaran; we must wait now till next night.”

So they returned to the underground passage sorrowfully: Hans, because of his renewed imprisonment; the goblins, because the making of gold must be put off. They were troubled, too, at his escape, and whispered among themselves, wondering how he managed the big stone.

“Perhaps he isn’t a man, at all,” said one; “better put him in the strong room.” So instead of the silver store-house, they led Hans this time to their strong room, where they kept their precious stones, of which they now and then dug a few when the weather was too stormy for charcoal work.

Their respect had increased for this little man that seemed to have at his tongue's end such long words, and who moved, with ease, stones that weighed a ton! They made the door of the strong room very fast, to be sure, but they left him a good light, and some wine in a flask, and plenty of fine white bread and cheese.

Hans looked sorrowfully about when they had gone. It was a small place, and seemed absolutely solid, the walls were so smooth and hard. As far as he could see, it was cut out of rock without a flaw, and the door this time was of stone, sliding in a groove, and securely fastened. Diamonds, rubies, and emeralds glittered in heaps, but of what use were they to poor Hans, who would soon be at his wits' end for excuses for not making gold? He picked some up in an absent way, and filled his pockets, and then fell to at the wine and bread and cheese, for his troubles did not prevent his being hungry. It was now day in the outer world, and the goblins, having nothing else to do, and being uneasy about this uncanny prisoner of theirs, determined to hold a great council, and consider how they would dispose of him. So they sent through the mountain, and by afternoon had all the goblins assembled in their

council-room, to discuss this important question. It took them a long while, for they wanted to do the fair thing both by him and for themselves. At last they concluded they would go with him to collect the hellebore, to see where it was found, then see the process of charring gold, and, when the whole thing was plain, and a good store of gold raked out, pop Hans into one of the pits and burn him up, and so cheerily wind up the business. This pleased them all so much that they took the rest of the afternoon to compliment each other upon being so clever.

Meantime our good puss was not idle. She knew where Hans was, and the hopelessness of getting him out except through the door. She watched till the goblins were all at council, and the council-door closed. Then she hastened to the smithy, and, jumping up on the bench, picked up a file in her mouth, and approached the smith.

“Ah, business!” said he; “I understand;” received the file, and obediently followed his sagacious friend.

She led the way along the passages till they reached the door of the strong room, which door, as already mentioned, ran in a groove; but being set on an incline, the moment it was unfastened, it slid

back by its own weight. It was a clever device of the goblins, who used to say with just pride, "When you want to open the door, there you are, you see!" They didn't say anything about shutting it. In fact it took so many of them to do it, and so used them up in the doing, that there was no breath left to make a remark.

The smith easily filed off the staple that held the hasp, and the door slid back. Puss looked in, and Hans was not slow to take leave of his lodgings. They walked quickly along the empty gallery, reached the great store-room, where the smith filled his leather apron with silver sticks, and then along the narrow passage to the smithy.

"We must all run for it this time," said the smith, and locking the door behind him, he followed the cat and Hans.

It was just coming on night, and they walked carefully, fearing the snares. There would have been no chance of escape but for the vanity of the goblins, who were wasting time complimenting each other in the council-room while their prisoners were running away. Even the watchmen were there.

They had now reached the bounds of the goblin

ground. The cat looked back at her two followers, mewed, and gave a great bound as if across an unseen chasm. But as she came to the ground again, they heard a loud ring as of bells in the mountain. The smith and Hans, in great haste, jumped too, but came down a long way short of the cat, and now the clang of bells in the hill was deafening. In fact, they had trod on the charmed circle which surrounded the goblin quarters, which was silent when mortals came, but gave voice in this clamorous way when they went.

Almost instantly the alarmed goblins came swarming out, and gave chase. The three fugitives ran at their best speed, through bush and briar, down the hill, but the goblins were so close behind, they would probably have been caught but for unexpected succor.

Senzel, missing Hans, had gone to the old woman's hut to inquire about him. He found he had been gone since the evening of the day before, and his mother was greatly distressed.

"He has been asking about the goblins," said she, "and I fear he has gone to see them."

Senzel felt too anxious to return home, so, leading

his donkey, he went up the mountain, hoping to find some trace of him. He had reached the cleared lot and was hesitating about going further, when he suddenly heard a great noise of running and shouting, and then saw Hans and the smith tumbling along down the hill-side, evidently in full flight. The donkey heard the noise too, and perhaps thinking it might be friends, gave a resounding bray. That fortunate bray saved our friends. The goblins stopped. "There come his brothers," cried they, and thinking their strength of body would equal their strength of voice, they all turned and scampered up as fast as they had come down.

Hans and Senzel and the smith were now relieved of their poverty, and they and the good old woman lived comfortably ever after. They thought it prudent, though, to move down into the town.

As for the goblins, they never ceased to wonder over the strength of the little gold-maker, who could move a rock that weighed a ton, and who broke the staple of the sliding door. They spent so much time looking for hellebore, and trying to single out Aldebaran, that they made much less silver than formerly, and as for the jewels Hans took, and the silver in

the smith's apron, they never so much as knew that they had gone.

The cat lived with Hans until she and he moved to a better world, and her descendants increased and multiplied until they were all over the country, and can be found anywhere if you will only cultivate their friendship.

“ Would my pussy cat do so ? ” asked little Hester.

“ Perhaps, if she knew.”

“ Then send her off to learn, do,” said little wise-head, “ for I might meet the charcoal burners.”

DIMPLE.

THERE was once a little girl who laughed so much and was so merry and good-humored, that her cheeks and chin were full of soft dimples, and everyone called her Dimple from the time she was a baby.

She lived in the country, and as she was always running about the meadows picking buttercups and violets, or wading with bare feet in the brook, everyone in the neighborhood knew her and liked her. As she grew older she drove the cow to pasture in the morning, and home again at night, for her mother; and weeded their little garden, and helped to wash and mend the clothes, and was a very useful little maiden, indeed.

Her hair was golden, and hung very full and long all round her shoulders, and the people said no one in the whole world had such beautiful hair as their little Dimple. But if her hair was beautiful, it was not a bit more so than her mouth, her nose, and her eyes. Nothing could be sweeter than her dear little mouth, and her blue eyes, with their long, dark eyelashes,

except possibly her little nose, which was the most perfect nose anybody ever had.

But little Dimple, like most little girls, had her faults. She liked to look at things which were forbidden, and she was too much given to jam. If she could find any jam, she ate all she could get, and sometimes got quite sick by doing so, which was both naughty and foolish.

Her mother often told her some misfortune would happen to her if she did not mend, and at last had to give up jam in the house altogether, and no one had any, because little Dimple would get it and eat it, if it were in any closet. So they had no jam.

Little Dimple grew and grew, and by and by she was quite a tall, handy girl, and knew how to do all household work.

In that country lived an old fairy, of whom everybody was rather afraid, but who was kind enough to good people, especially if they happened to be poor. This fairy wanted a house-girl, and as she treated her house-girls very well when she liked them, and always gave them some nice clothes and pretty presents when they left to be married, a great many young girls wished to be her housemaid. But she

chose Dimple, for she had often seen her driving the cow to pasture, and weeding her mother's garden; and she knew she was industrious and sweet-tempered, and she liked her pretty face, and her wavy golden hair. So Dimple went, but before she went, her mother said, "Now, Dimple, remember, your mistress is a fairy; obey her, and all will be well; disobey her, and you had better not have lived. Don't look where you are forbidden, and don't eat jam."

Dimple promised, but she had not been a month at the fairy's house, when one morning, the fairy unlocked the door of a great closet, went in, and soon brought out a dish of strawberry jam, and put it on the supper table. She gave Dimple some, and took some herself, and then put it on the shelf, and said it must last a week. She had carefully locked the closet door when she came out.

Now if there was one thing in the whole world that Dimple liked, it was strawberry jam. The more she looked at the dish on the shelf, the more she wanted it, until at last, when the fairy had gone to bed, she pushed a chair to the shelf, and ate hastily and fearfully a good quarter of what was left. Then she went to bed, but lay awake a long time, thinking

over what she had done, and wondering what the fairy would say in the morning.

The morning came, and the fairy took down the dish for breakfast. "Why, who has been eating my jam?" said she.

Dimple turned very red, and said, "Perhaps it was a rat." The fairy said nothing more, and they ate their breakfast in silence.

The next evening Dimple could not resist eating some more, and she took another quarter. In the morning the fairy took down the dish and cried, "Why, who could have eaten the jam?" Dimple said again, "Perhaps it was a rat," and again they sat down and ate their breakfast without talking, as they usually did at breakfast-time.

The next night Dimple finished the jam, as she thought the fairy believed it to be eaten by a rat. In the morning the fairy took down the dish, and seeing it was empty, she said, "Why, who could have eaten the jam?" and Dimple again answered, "Perhaps it was a rat."

The fairy was very silent for two or three days, but she brought out no more jam. Dimple looked at the great door of the closet, and wished she could

go in there, where doubtless there was boundless jam, but the lock was strong and she had no key, for the fairy always kept the key in her room.

At last one day the fairy changed all her clothes in order to go away and see the king of the country ; and before she went, she told Dimple she must keep the house clean and neat, but she must not go into her room on any account. Then off she went.

So Dimple bustled about the house, and made it as clean and white as a pin, everywhere. For she was very neat and clever, and no speck of dust could stay a minute, she was so quick to brush it away.

But after a day or two she began to long to look into the fairy's room. That was very naughty, you know. But, from thinking about it only, she at last looked in through the keyhole, and finally, on the fourth day, she fairly opened the door.

The room was very still, the sun was shining in, and there was nothing to see, beyond the fairy's every-day clothes hanging on a peg by the window. Dimple was about to shut the door and go away, when she bethought herself that perhaps the key of the closet was in the pocket of the clothes. She



immediately ran across, felt of the clothes, and there, sure enough, was the great key! She took it out and hurried down stairs to the closet. In a moment the door was open, and there indeed was boundless jam! She might eat a week, and no one could see the difference. There were great jars, like barrels, full of it, and dishes and dishes. She seized a spoon and had taken a mouthful, when she felt a touch on her shoulder.

She turned, and there was the fairy! Her face was no longer kind and gentle, but very severe, and little Dimple would have been glad to sink into the ground, as she stood there, the spoon in her hand, her pretty mouth red with jam, and with frightened eyes.

“You have stolen, you have lied, and you have broken into my closet; what shall I do to you?” said the fairy.

Poor little Dimple answered never a word.

“If you were a bad girl altogether,” said the fairy, “I would make you old and ugly forever; but you have been a good girl until now, so I give you a chance. Go home, and look in the glass. What I give you, you shall keep until you give away what you like best.”

Then little Dimple, glad to escape, hurried out of the house, and home to her mother's as fast as she could run, and the first thing she did when she got there was to look in the glass. O, what a sight she saw! On each cheek a patch of jam, so large that they made her eyes look small, and her nose look pinched. Bright red strawberry-jam patches! Never was a little girl made such a fright. No one could know her for little Dimple, for she looked more like old Bottlenose, the ragman, than she did like a little girl.

As soon as Dimple caught sight of this sad change, she quite fainted away and fell upon the floor. Her mother heard the noise, and running up-stairs, at first thought it was some old woman who had stolen little Dimple's clothes. But when Dimple could speak, and told her the whole story, then she saw it was her own little daughter, and she comforted her and kissed her, without minding the change.

So Dimple lived with her mother, and she never went out till dark, and she saw no one, and she tied her beautiful hair in a close knot behind her head. Only in her room at night, she let it down, and combed it, and smoothed it, and kissed it, and cried

over it, for it was the only thing left of her happy days. She and her mother often talked over the fairy's last words, but neither of them could understand what they meant, nor how she was ever to get rid of her dreadful jam face.

All the neighbors, by and by, came to know of it, because she was sometimes seen weeding the garden or milking the cow, so her mother was obliged to tell the whole story. After a while, too, poor Dimple got a little used to her new face, and as she was really good, she did not wish her mother to drive the cow to pasture, or to fetch wood, so she went out more and more, and everybody knew of her ugliness. I am sorry to say the little boys and young men were not very kind, and they laughed at her, and called her "Old Jam," and by and by that came to be her name instead of her pretty one of Dimple.

All this was hard enough, but worse was to come.

One day her mother died, and poor Dimple had to go and get her living as best she could. She tried to find a place as maid in some farmer's house, but though every one knew how hard she worked, and how good-hearted she was, they could not bear to see such an ugly face all day long. So she went

from place to place, until at last the only thing she could get to do, was to sweep the prison, for which they only gave her a little bread and water to live on, and now and then an old gown for her dress.

Thus you see poor Dimple, half-starved and ragged, with bare feet, and a dirty handkerchief on her head, sweeping the rough floor of the prison, with no friend in the world, and nothing to comfort her, except her golden hair, which every night she let down, and combed, and kissed, and cried over, as all she had of those happy days when she ran through the meadows and played in the brook, and everybody loved her.

But all this time, though nobody knew it, not even Dimple herself, she was as beautiful as ever, all except the jam patches. Her mouth was like a rosebud, her eyes were like angels' eyes, her hair was wavy and golden, and so full, that when she let it down it was like a cloud all around her, and kept her warm at night. Her skin, under her old rags, was as white as snow; and her hands and feet, though made rough by hard work, were the prettiest little hands and feet ever seen since the days of Cinderella. But her hair, by day, was always tightly



tied up and under the handkerchief; her eyes and nose were made small and ugly by the swollen cheeks, and nobody could see the pretty shape under the ragged old gown.

So she was called Old Jam, and swept the prison. And often she lay awake half the night, wondering what the fairy's words meant: "*What I give you, you shall keep, until you give away what you like best.*"

Now it happened, when poor Dimple had swept the prison some six months or so, that a great storm came in that country, and in the storm a ship was broken on the rocks, and all the people drowned except one, who was washed ashore among the pieces of wood and wreck. When the people found him, they brought him to the king, and said he was a robber, and that the ship was a robber ship, and that the man should be killed; so the king put him in prison, that he might think about it.

When he was brought to the prison, he had been so hardly treated, first by the rough waves and then by the rough people, that he indeed looked like a robber. For his clothes were very ragged and dirty, his hair and beard were rough and uncombed, and his face was thin and haggard for want of food.

But he was not a robber at all; he was a noble young prince, the son of another king, who was at war with the king of the country, and therefore if he had been known to be the prince he was, the king would never have let him go.

So he said nothing about it, hoping he might find a chance to run away, as long as they thought he was only a common robber. They treated him very badly in the prison. They kicked and struck him, and sometimes gave him nothing to eat the whole day, not even a small piece of bread. No one was kind to him except poor Dimple, who was always kind to every one. When she came to sweep the robber's room, she always brought him half her bread, though she had not enough for herself; and seeing that every one said hard things to him, she spoke kindly, and told him not to give up hoping.

At first he did not like to look at her, her red jam face was so very disagreeable; but when he found she had a gentle silvery voice and angel's eyes, he did not notice the rest so much.

But still, it must be confessed, he thought her an ugly old woman, for he was a handsome young prince underneath his rags and dirt and rough hair,

and in his own country, all the young ladies were in love with him.

Thus every day she gave him bread, and words of comfort, and was the only friend he had.

At last, one day, the jailer came in and said to the supposed robber, "To-morrow you will be free, for the king's order has come that you are to be burnt alive." Then the prince was very sorry.

Towards evening came poor Dimple to sweep the prison. "To-morrow," said he, "I am to be burnt alive ; but if I had a rope, this night I could escape from the window, and cheat the cruel king."

Then Dimple bethought herself. There was no rope, but there was her thick, long hair. It was her only happiness left, but the poor prisoner would burn without it. She pulled off the handkerchief, and in a moment her hair fell down around her, like a golden mantle. With her scissors she cut it off close to her head, handful after handful, as fast as she could, lest her resolution should give way, and throwing it on the bench where he sat, she cried, half breathless, "The rope is there ; weave quickly, or the morning will come," and then turned to go.

But the young prince started to his feet. "Stop,"

he cried, "who are you?" and he stretched out his arms, and would have caught her, but she was gone in a moment.

No wonder he started, for she had, not knowing it, fulfilled the fairy's words. *She had given away what she liked best*, and the reward had come as instantly as the original punishment. The horrible strawberry jam patches had gone, and as she spoke her last words to him, the prince had seen before him the most lovely face he had ever looked upon, instead of the ugly image that was there a moment ago.

But he had no time to lose. He must weave his rope from the golden hair and let himself down from the window and get safe to the seashore before morning, or he would burn in quick fire. He wove fast, and long before morning he had reached the shore, and found a boat. He hoisted his sail, and the wind blowing fair, he soon reached his father's kingdom and was safe.

Now we must see what became of poor Dimple.

She had no looking-glass now, and she did not know of the change that had happened. All she could do was to sit up all night and cry over the loss

of her dear hair, though she said to herself over and over again, she would rather lose it and her head too, than that the poor robber should be burnt.

But when morning came, and the jailer looked into the prison, they found the prisoner gone, and a rope hanging at the window. So they carried the rope to the king, and all the wise men came and looked at it, and they said it was made of the hair of a woman's head. But the jailer said there was no woman in the prison except Old Jam, and she had no hair, always wearing a dirty old handkerchief on her head.

“Bring her here!” said the king, sternly.

But when they went to look for her, they found in the room no Old Jam, but a most beautiful young maiden. However, they took her to the king, and when they removed the handkerchief, there, plainly enough, every one could see that she had had golden hair, and that it had all just been cut off.

“She is a witch,” said the wise men, “and has changed herself.” So the king ordered that she should be burned instead of the robber, and gave thirty days for all his people to hear the story and to come and see her burned. So poor Dimple seems to be in a worse case than ever before.

Now we will turn to the young prince again.

Though safe at home in his father's palace, and with all the lovely ladies making much of him, he cannot forget, even for a single moment, the heavenly face he saw in the dark prison, as Dimple turned to leave him. He had kept a little lock of her hair, which he wore on his heart, and kissed many hundred times every night, so that his sleep was broken, and his father began to fear he would fall sick and die.

So, then, the father, being a wise king, and loving his son, asked him many times why he was so troubled, until at last the prince told him the whole story, and said he never could be well unless he could marry the prison maiden. And the king said, "Take ten thousand horsemen and ride straight through that country to the prison, and bring her home, and if she is as beautiful and good as you say, you shall marry her though she and her ancestors have swept the prison for a thousand years."

Then the prince was joyful, and he and his horsemen set out upon their journey.

When they arrived at the borders of the country of the other king, the prince heard that a great festival was taking place because of the burning of a

witch, who had given her hair for a prisoner to escape. And he knew it was poor Dimple, and hastened, and he and his soldiers rode day and night.

Now the day had come for poor Dimple to be burned, and that she might make a better show, they had given her new and handsome clothes, and glasses, and brushes, and baths; so she had seen her own face, and knew her jam patches were gone, and what the fairy's words meant.

But now that she was handsome again, she began to think more of the poor robber, and to love him, though she did not know he was a prince. And, loving him, she thought she would rather be burnt than have him burnt.

The king and wise men and all the people sat in a circle on benches, and in the middle poor little Dimple, all dressed in silk and cloth of gold, so that she looked like a princess, was fastened with iron chains to a post, and piles of wood, ready for the burning, were set all round.

But just as the king gave the order to light the fire, every one heard a distant sound that shook the earth. All waited, and listened. Nearer and nearer

it came, and then suddenly, through the trees and houses that were around the square, came riding furiously so many horsemen that no one could count them. They broke through the ring of soldiers, and riding up to Dimple, the prince, their captain, cut the chains with quick blows of his sword, and lifting her on to his horse, they all rode away as fast as they had come.

And the king and his people never ceased to believe that poor Dimple had done it all by her witchcraft.

The prince's father liked Dimple when he saw her, and was very ready his son should marry a maiden so good and so beautiful. So there was a great marriage; and in the midst of it, who should walk into the church but the old fairy, leading by the hand Dimple's mother, who was not dead after all, the fairy only having taken her away for a time, that Dimple might at last have no friend or comforter but her own golden hair, and so be able to fulfil the fairy's words.

Dimple and the prince lived happily and prosperously, and when at last they became king and queen, it was said in that country, there had never

been so good a king and queen since the beginning of time. They had many little boys and girls, and above all things Dimple taught them, —

Not to go where they were forbidden.

Not to take what was not theirs.

And always to tell the truth.

And now, little folks, I know what question you want to ask: whether Dimple's hair ever grew again. Yes, indeed, it did, — so long, so wavy, so golden, that a thousand years after she was known to the people of that country by the name of the Queen with the Golden Hair.

“And what did the fairy do with the rest of the jam?” asks four-year-old Madge.

“She put it in closets, here and there, for nice little girls.”

“O yes,” cries she eagerly, “I know; we have got some, but I didn’t know before the way it came.”

THE TWO PRINCES.

THERE were once two queens, one in the north-east and one in the south-west, both beloved of the fairies, and each with a son born on the same day.

Their husbands, the kings, were killed soon after in battle, and these two queens, having much upon their hands, and fearful of the future, asked the fairies to give protecting gifts to their boys, that would serve them when they grew up. But the fairies, though ever so willing, could only offer one to each, and they gave the queens the choice of what they would have. The north-east queen, with the fair boy, after much thought, seeing that she had an unruly people and many enemies, asked that her son might be resolute.

The south-west queen, with the dark boy, chose that he should be ready of tongue; for her people, though noisy and clamorous, were easily led by agreeable and persuasive words.

The boys were brought up by their mothers with

great care, and though living far apart and unknowing of each other, being born under the same star, had like fortunes, and were destined, though they did not know it, to meet at some time or other. Both were tall, strong, and active. Both could ride, throw a javelin, or shoot an arrow, better than anyone else in their country, and both were taught to catch in the hand an arrow in full flight, and to avoid the thrust of a spear, though close to the breast.

The gifts proved well chosen. The north-east prince, when he reached manhood, found his kingdom in disorder, and his mother hard pressed by many enemies.

He had at first only a few soldiers, but when they found that he never tired and never turned back; that one by one he overthrew all the robbers and bad people that troubled the country, more came to him, and they all grew so bold, that no number made any difference, and they always conquered.

So, after a few years, his little kingdom was at peace, and he was known all through the neighboring countries as Prince Resolute.

The south-west prince, on his part, when he came to rule, found his country full of noisy talkers; and

though, having plenty of good soldiers, he could easily conquer his enemies, these talkers so excited the people that the land was full of turbulence. But he proved the best talker of all, and so won the people's hearts, that at last he was able to take all the other talkers and put them in treadmills, where they ground corn instead of talking; and thus his kingdom also became very peaceful. He was called Prince Silver-tongue.

But now both queens fell ill, and the physicians, being unable to cure them, they sent to the fairies to know if they could be made well, or whether it was their death-illness. The fairies sent answer it was curable, but only by the leaves of the tree of health, which lay in deep woods beyond the Mountains of the Sun.

Now all the world knew that nearly every one died on the way who went for those leaves, and were never heard of again. Only once or twice, in far-away times, had they been gathered and brought back. So the two queens prepared to die, as they thought the leaves could not be had.

But their sons loved their mothers so much that they resolved that they would fetch the leaves or

not come back themselves, and each left his own country, secretly and alone, upon the adventure, for so only could it be accomplished.

Each was dressed in steel armor, with spear and sword, and mounted on a good horse ; and each, as he travelled, approached the other without knowing it, for there was only one pass through the mountains, and that lay midway between.

So here are our two princes, all preliminaries cleared away, bound upon their adventures, and depending for success on their own hands and heads alone. It was now of no use to them that they were princes, and they would have fared ill, as you will see, if they had been two lazy people all their youth, and not have improved themselves with study and pains, as they had.

Prince Resolute, steadily travelling on, came, the first of the two, to a great desert of sand and stones. Here were no houses, no date-trees, no springs. He saved his food and water, all that he could, but be as sparing as he might, the day came when his water was gone, and neither he nor his horse had drank a drop for many hours. He now walked, as the horse grew weak, but they were beginning to faint under

the hot sun, when he saw in the distance the green patch of a desert spring. He was glad at heart when he saw that, as you may think, and they quickened their steps as their thirsty throats, in anticipation, already felt the water cooling their parched tongues.

But as they came near, Prince Resolute saw a number of desert people at the spring, just mounting their horses and camels. So he mounted his horse and prepared for fight, and as he rode up, they left the spring, and stopping between him and it, the leader called in a loud voice, "Pass on, stranger. There is no water here but for the desert men." Then Prince Resolute was very angry, and would have been glad to attack them, but when he spurred his horse, the poor creature was so faint that he could not move from his walk. There was no fighting for Prince Resolute. He could only upbraid and threaten, and to that they gave no heed, so he was obliged to pass on as they ordered. Before long, his horse fell upon the sand, overcome by heat and thirst, and died, and his rider was not much better off. Still he never thought of turning back, if that had now been possible, and throwing away his armor, he kept on as well as he could. Soon he threw down his spear,

and after that his sword, for now he was so much weakened that it would be well if he saved his life at any cost. He had only his dagger left to defend himself with, if in danger; and for clothes, only those which he had worn under his armor. But now at last, just as he was ready to expire, he saw before him the bounds of the desert. There, he knew, must be water, and perhaps a date-tree. He struggled on, and just as he felt that he could go no farther, gasping for life, as it were, he reached the banks of a small river, and fell, stumbling, on its brink. When he had satisfied his thirst, he looked about and found date-trees in abundance; so after a few days he was able to go on. He was now on foot, but being strong and bold, he walked cheerily on, and already began to forget his desert trials and his losses. As he walked, he heard the tramp of a horse behind, in the rocky road, and being without arms, he hid himself, and soon saw a knight in handsome armor ride past. He waited until he was out of sight, and then continued, much wondering that any one could have passed that dreadful desert and saved both horse and armor, and also what could be his errand on that lonely road.

The clever little people that hear this story will know it was Prince Silver-tongue, and that he was bound on the same errand as Prince Resolute. What they will want to know beside is, how he got there ; so we will go back to him as he reaches the borders of the desert, a short time after our first prince.

He also was careful to waste no bread or water, but the way was long, and he also at last had nothing for either his horse or himself. He also walked, leading his horse, and at last he saw the green island of the spring in the midst of the cruel sand.

But when he drew near, and the desert people rode out, and the leader cried, "Pass on, stranger, there is no water here save for the desert men," he answered softly, —

"Noble prince, the water is yours to give or to withhold. Hear my story, and if you then say 'Pass on,' I will pass without further word, though to my death."

When the desert men heard this polite answer to their rough order, then they said among themselves, "This is a noble person, and his story may be a delight to hear; let us agree with him." So they agreed, and as he could not speak long for reason of

his parched tongue, they gave him and his horse a little water before he began.

Prince Silver-tongue told them of his mother, her goodness, her illness, and of his errand, and he asked them in the name of their own mothers to let him finish it; and then, if they wished, he would return and give them his life. He said nothing of his being a prince.

When he concluded, they all embraced him, led him to the water, filled his water-skins, and his bags with dates, and when he departed they told him he had but to speak and the very stones would do as he wished. So, being well supplied, he reached the farther bounds of the desert, rested for awhile on the banks of the river, and shortly passed Prince Resolute, as we have seen. As night approached, he travelled on quickly, the way being stony and difficult in the dark, and soon left Prince Resolute far behind.

The next day as he journeyed he heard, towards noon, the noise of a cataract which seemed to descend from the mountains near which he now was. As he approached, it grew louder and louder, resounding through the air. "Ah, here is the next trial," he thought. At last he reached the bank, and saw an

angry river rushing down a deep and wide ravine, and bearing with it trees and rocks. It was so furious and wild that it seemed as if no man nor horse could enter it and live. Prince Silver-tongue rode down the stream some way, but found no passage, while above, the way was barred by great rocks. Where the rough road met the river there was a small rock in the middle, and after watching some time, the prince saw that every now and then there was a lull in the rush of water, and though the flood still whirled and eddied, he thought the rock might be reached in the short moment of quiet. Each time, however, when the lull came, it came so suddenly, and the moment, he knew, was so short, that he failed to spur in at the instant; and so, uncertain and wavering, he spent most of the afternoon. At last, seeing that the sun approached its setting, he made up his mind to plunge in at the next lull. It came, more suddenly than ever; he hesitated, then gave his horse the spur, and in they went. The noble charger struggled bravely with the current, bearing his heavy burden of man and armor. He neared the rock, but, alas, the loss of that first moment was fatal to him; the current swelled to

fury, and he could not gain it. Just as he was swept away, however, the prince threw himself forward, caught a projecting point, and drew himself to safety. His horse disappeared among the whirling waters and was lost. The prince had still to swim the other half, and throwing off his armor, and leaving that and his sword and spear, he made ready for the lull, now very watchful to lose no moment. It came as before, and as it came, he plunged, and swimming with all his strength he just reached the farther bank.

There he lay, breathless but thankful; and now you see both princes reduced to the same plight, and not only no longer with any advantage through being princes, but without horse or arms, and with nothing to help their stout hearts and good wits but their hands and a slender dagger!

Prince Silver-tongue, soon recovering, went on, and found shelter for the night in a hollow rock by the wayside, which formed a rough sort of hut, and gave shelter for a fire to warm and dry by.

He had lost so much time by the river that, though left so far behind, Prince Resolute came up to it towards nightfall of the same day, and, like his

fellow traveller, went, for awhile, up and down, looking for a ford. He also found none, and soon observed the strange and momentary lull that came in the rapid rush of the river. He lost no time in making up his mind, and, true to his name, when the moment came, plunged instantly in, and reached the rock without difficulty. Here he found the armor and weapons of Prince Silver-tongue, and easily saw what had happened to the knight that had ridden by so bravely, the day before. He could not take them, for it needed all his force to reach the shore, which he did safely, when the lull came.

Night was now upon him, but it was so wild and chill by the river bank, that he continued on for a space, and so it happened that before long he saw the light of Prince Silver-tongue's fire.

He cautiously approached, but seeing that it was a single man, and moreover that it was probably the knight who had lost his armor and horse in the river, he showed himself in the bright light, and called aloud, "Sir Knight, give me leave to dry and warm myself by your fire."

Prince Silver-tongue was astonished at hearing a human voice, but answered courteously, "If you are

a true man, you are welcome to my fire ; but why do you speak to me as to a knight ? for I have neither armor nor horse."

"I saw you pass with both," said Prince Resolute, "and I have just seen your armor on the rock, and know what has befallen you."

Prince Silver-tongue looked at him with more surprise than ever, and noticing that the stranger was dressed like himself in the leather suit that is worn under armor, and like him was armed only with a dagger, he said, "You too are a knight, and lost your horse and arms in that fearful river !"

"No," said Prince Resolute, "I lost them sooner ; but let us sit by the fire, and tell of our adventures."

So they told each other of the errand upon which they were going, and the adventures they had met, but without giving their names or rank. They agreed to join company and be faithful comrades, and in no case to forsake each other.

When morning broke, they set forth on the rocky road, and each, looking at the other, admired his handsome and stately person, and inwardly rejoiced at the good fortune of such a companion. The watchful fairies, who knew all that passed, smiled

among themselves, and said, "Now our gifts are doubled," meaning that the qualities of both princes would now serve each.

As they journeyed on, the mountains rose steeper and steeper above them, and finally closed in so much upon the rocky water-course up which they toiled, that the cliffs were like walls of rock on each side.

Storm clouds now swept over the sky, and thunder broke the stillness, the wind rushing with fury down the pass. Louder and louder roared the thunder, and blinding flashes of lightning dazzled their eyes, while the rain poured in heavy sheets. Their road now became a rushing torrent, and they struggled on, having as much as they could do to keep their footing, and advance. Suddenly, right in front, they found the way barred by a wall of rock, with no turn to the right or left; no way of climbing the steep rocks, down which rushed cataracts of water from the rain. They stood for a moment perplexed, when, looking more closely, they saw, breast high in the rock across the way, a heavy bronze ring hanging from a staple. Above was written in deep letters the single word, "Beware!"

Prince Resolute, always ready, seized the ring at

once, and pulled fiercely. A wide crack appeared in the rock, but the thunder and lightning redoubled in violence, and the noise and tumult of the storm were sufficient to overwhelm the stoutest.

Nothing daunted, Prince Resolute pulled again, more fiercely than before ; the rock opened farther, but now the cliffs above came tumbling down, and death seemed so certain and instant that Prince Silver-tongue turned to fly. But his companion seized his arm, and with all his force pulled again at the ring, when lo, the rock opened, the storm ceased as suddenly as it had risen, and the way lay clear before them.

Still clasping hands, the knights passed quickly through without hesitation ; and it was well they did, for they had scarcely cleared the opening when the rock closed instantly but without noise or jar, and looking back, they could scarcely believe their memories, so solid was the wall behind, so impressive the stillness that surrounded them.

“ We are now on enchanted land,” said Prince Silver-tongue ; “ we have left our world behind, and we need to be watchful.”

They began to descend the rocky pass which was

much like that they had climbed on the other side. They had not gone far when they saw, coming up towards them, two large lions, walking silently, but their fierceness showing plainly in their savage eyes, stealthy step, and bristling manes. The knights drew their daggers, and taking the sides for the advantage of the rock, with brave hearts, advanced to the deadly struggle. It may be that for an instant each thought of his good armor and sword, now far behind, but the main thought was to do their best in whatever befell. To their surprise, the lions passed between without attacking them. They faced about, thinking they might turn, but the beasts kept on and soon disappeared in the windings of the pass. Then they noticed that the way was strewn with the bones of men, and they wondered the more at their escape from a peril which they saw had been death to many before them.

There is no harm in our knowing the reason, though they could not, and it was because their hearts were so firm. Had an eyelid of either knight quivered, as he faced the savage glare of their eyes, the fierce beasts would have turned, and there would have been instantly a desperate struggle

for life. The truth is, that in the enchanted land, it is force of spirit that prevails, rather than force of body, and their dauntless courage was better to them than their swords or armor.

As they reached the foot of the mountains, they entered upon plains over which they travelled a long time, meeting no adventures, but with little to eat and scanty water to drink, often living for days upon roots and berries. They became ragged and foot-sore, their only foot-covering being grass sandals, which they wove themselves. To all appearance the country was like their own, and it began to fade from their minds that it was enchanted land. Still each day they walked bravely on, intent on their errand, never sorrowing that they had come, and rejoicing in the good fortune of each other's company.

One afternoon as they came to a spring of water, they found an old woman sitting by it, crying and moaning over her broken crutch. They asked the matter, and she showed them her hut, high on a distant hill, which she said she could never reach again, but must lie there to be killed by the beasts that came to drink of the spring at night. She was

very old and dirty and deformed, and on coming closer, the knights saw she was afflicted with leprosy, a dreadful disease which passes from one to another by the touch. But without hesitation, kindly and courteously, the knights lifted her up, bade her be of good cheer, and though far out of their way, carried her up the rocky hill to the door of her hut.

The old woman said to herself as she saw their courtesy, "These are gentle knights bound on that hopeless errand, and not swine-herds as I thought at first;" and she wept still more when they put her down.

"What trouble now?" said the knights. But she hobbled in without answering, and they only heard, as she went, the words, —

"Poor youths, even if they break the mirror, they will not kill the griffin."

They could make nothing of that except that dangers still lay before them, which they knew already, so they continued on their way as before.

One evening they came upon a wood which lay in their path, and, entering it, immediately found themselves separated, they could not see how. But walk as they might, a tree stood in the way, and trying to

avoid it, they ran upon another. The light was dim and fading, adding to the difficulty, and soon Prince Resolute lost all patience, and rushing angrily to the right and left, calling to his companion, he struck himself with such violence against the trunks that he fell senseless.

Prince Silver-tongue fared better. After trying, like his friend, to find a way through the trunks, he suddenly recalled what they had both now nearly forgotten, that they were in the enchanted land, and saw in a moment that this was an enchanted forest. He stopped at once, and addressing the trees, said,—

“O fair spirits, by the memory of what you once were, give us passage through your domain.”

Instantly a road opened through the wood to him, but he would not go on until he had found his friend, who lay, still senseless, not far off. Prince Silver-tongue raised him in his arms and carried him until he reached a spring, and there, after a while, he recovered his senses.

They travelled on now with more care, and soon seeing a tall castle, they considered whether they had better keep in the road, or ask for shelter for a night. As danger was everywhere, they decided for the

castle, and knocked loudly at the outer gate. They were well received, the warden at the gate saying that his mistresses entertained all passing strangers, and after washing themselves of dust and combing their now tangled hair, for they had not been in a house for many weeks, they entered the hall. Two ladies of middle age welcomed them, and inquired their business in travelling through the country. The knights frankly told their errand, but said nothing about their adventures, and after supper they were shown to their room, the ladies going with them to the door. Prince Resolute walked in quickly. Prince Silver-tongue, more courteous, stood bowing, and stepped backward in, when the door fell to with some violence, and he heard the click of a heavy lock, and at the same time a low laugh outside.

He stood listening. "We are trapped," he thought, "but where is my companion?" for he heard no sound behind him. One must be wary in the enchanted land, and just then the words of the old woman flashed across him, and now he felt that on his caution and good wits depended their success and their lives. He doubted to look round, for all was silence in the room. He bethought him of the

glittering blade of his dagger, and holding it up, he saw behind him as in a glass. No one was in the room. His companion was gone. The most striking object was an oval mirror with strangely glittering surface. Walking carefully backward, without looking round, he reached the mirror, and with a back-handed stroke with his dagger, broke it into shivers.

He now looked about. The room was square and large, the stone walls hung with the woven cloth called tapestry, with figures of men worked on it of the size of life, and there were a few rough pieces of furniture. The strange thing was, what had become of Prince Resolute. He felt cautiously on the floor, but could find no trap-door. He then examined the tapestry, and it was not long before he discovered, in one of the life-size figures, that of his companion, enchanted beyond a doubt, and enchanted through looking in the mirror, now fortunately broken.

How should he set him free! Enchantments sometimes lasted hundreds of years, and meantime his mother would die, and his own life pass away. Still the faithful prince never thought of forsaking his friend. He only revolved in his mind what method might set him free. The mirror was gone; that

would help. He remembered that the light of the sun sometimes dispelled enchantments, and on looking at the windows, he found the sunlight was carefully kept out by heavy curtains.

The tapestry was too heavy to move as it hung, so with his dagger he cut out the strip that held his friend, and then remembering that probably all the figures represented living men, he spent the night cutting the whole tapestry into strips. By early morning he had thrown all the strips from the windows to the bank below, and the windows being too high to escape from, waited for the rising sun for the result. As his first beams fell upon the bank, there rose a great rustling and sighing, and immediately the bank was crowded with living men, who looked about them in amazement. Prince Resolute soon recalled them to themselves, and pointing to his friend in the castle window, they all hastened to the castle door to release him.

This they did without difficulty, for no one in the castle looked for such an unusual ending to their night's work, and so they were unprepared. Some of their disenchanted would have slain all in the castle, but our two knights thought that the mischief was

stopped by the breaking of the mirror, and though they put some good men in it to protect travellers instead of harming them, they left the two ladies and their servants untouched.

We can all imagine the joy of Prince Silver-tongue, and the gratitude of Prince Resolute, whose life had now twice been saved. In truth, the debt of each to the other was equal, for Prince Silver-tongue would have perished at the pass but for Prince Resolute's determination; but neither thought of what he had done for the other.

They now journeyed through a settled country, but they saw that the houses were guarded and barred as if some great danger always threatened. When they sought entrance for food or shelter, no one answered to their calls. Early one morning, when near a rocky hill, they saw that the ground was covered with bones, while the air was sickening with a noisome smell, as of slaughtered beasts. As they came up, they found the side of the hill was hollowed into a lofty cave, and from it projected the scaly tail of an immense dragon or griffin, evidently asleep within.

"It is the griffin," said Prince Silver-tongue, "what fortune for us that we pass unharmed."

They went quickly and quietly on, and when at a half day's journey distance, stopped to rest at one of the country houses, which they found open, and where they were admitted. They asked why the houses were so closed and forsaken; and the people told them that the griffin ate men, as well as beasts, and had half stripped the land. And living always in terror of a dreadful death, many drowned themselves and their children, rather than live for such a fate.

Then our good knights consulted with each other, and they agreed that whatever happened, they must go back and assault the griffin, or they could never return home in honor.

They looked about for weapons, but all they could find were two ox-goads, which are staves of oak about the length of a man, with sharp iron points.

With these and their daggers, they returned to fight a battle which would have been odds against a hundred men, clad in steel and armed with sword and spear.

But we remember that it is in enchanted land, where the tough heart counts for more than the tough hand, and we will hope for the best until we see our good princes lose courage.

There was no lack of it when they came to the cave and saw the monster just arousing from his sleep. They rushed upon him, and as he opened his frightful jaws to swallow this sudden enemy, Prince Resolute, who was foremost, planted his ox-goad upright between them, so that they were transfixed as he tried to close them. The prince fell back, nearly insensible, overcome by his horrid breath; but Prince Silver-tongue, sitting astride his body, plunged the ox-goad deep into his very heart. The creature rolled and floundered in agony, trying to reach his enemies with his tail or claws, but though they were thrown to the ground, and were crushed, and bruised, and covered with the blood and foam which came from him, they managed to avoid his blows, and again and again stabbed him deep in vital parts, until with a snort and bellow that shook the hill, he rolled over upon his back dead.

It was some time before the princes recovered from their bruises, and from the effects of the poisonous breath of the griffin, but at last they were able to crawl away to a roadside rivulet, where they bathed and drank, and were then able to examine the body. They were themselves astonished at their

victory, and could only suppose that they were helped by the good fairies, to have prevailed in so unequal a struggle.

They were surprised to find a gold chain about his neck, to which hung a small gold key. They cut a link, and slipped off chain and all. Attached to the key was a little label, also of gold, on which was written, —

“Look that you keep me with might and main,
Or toil and danger are all in vain.”

Prince Silver-tongue immediately placed the chain about Prince Resolute's neck, saying, “If we have might and main enough to keep you, you shall surely be at hand to unlock your door when we come to it.” To their surprise, the chain fastened itself, shrinking to the proper length, and they knew then that it concerned their enterprise in some manner.

They now hastened on their way, both because of the lost time, and to avoid the greater delay of meeting the people of the country, who would have kept them out of gratitude for so great a deliverance. They soon passed into a hilly country rising into mountains, and found themselves travelling along a ravine which finally sank into a deep chasm with

sheer sides, hundreds of feet down, and beyond the ordinary leap of a man across. As they walked, they were attracted by the twittering of a bird on the opposite side, and, looking for the reason, saw that he was fascinated by a large snake which sought to eat him. Close at hand, on the other side of the small tree he was on, was his mate, also under the spell of a snake's eyes. The princes looked about for a stone, but none were at hand. They shouted, but in vain; the snakes paid no heed.

"What shall we do?" said Prince Silver-tongue; "the chasm is wide; shall we risk life for two birds?"

"It is to help the distressed," said Prince Resolute; "it is our duty, and we must leap the chasm." Then both princes, exerting all their strength, leaped the wide chasm, and the snakes glided away. The birds rose up, hovered an instant about the heads of the princes, and then shot high in air and disappeared.

"It seemed to me," said one, "that that bird that almost touched my head, carried a message of comfort and hope to my mother." And the same thought had come to both.

They crossed shortly at the head of the chasm, and descended into a beautiful plain, full of fruit-trees and glittering streams.

As they passed along the road, the smiling people offered them entertainment, and pressed them to stay at their houses and tell their adventures. But they took only bread and water, and pressed on, for now so much time had passed that they feared they might be too late, even if they gained the leaves. They left this pleasant country behind, and now they approached a singular spectacle. It looked as if the whole country before them was covered with frost-work. When they came to it, they found it was a true forest of silver. The leaves were light and fluttering, the small twigs bent, and the branches waved, but it was all of purest silver. The road, well kept and smooth, lay beneath the spreading trees.

“We approach some great adventure,” said Prince Silver-tongue; “let us stop at this brook, wash, and prepare ourselves, and in the morning, after prayer to God, we will enter the wood.”

So they passed the night upon the border, and in the morning, they entered the silver wood. It was still more beautiful when within. The light came through the silver leaves, as if moonlight, and even the broken twigs and branches upon the ground were all

alike of purest silver, chased and encrusted as in frost-work.

So they walked on, wary and vigilant, prepared for any snare that might lurk in this beautiful place but full of delight with the glory of the scene. By and by, they saw in front another line of forest, where the silver seemed to change to yellow. To their astonishment, they now entered upon a forest of gold, as perfect in leaf, twig, and branch, as that of silver. The golden light through the leaves made their road one of royal splendor.

In silence, but full of wonder and admiration, they continued their course, still keen and watchful, still looking for their adventure. And now, in front, they saw the waving green of a natural forest. Soon they entered upon that, and if they had before enjoyed the beauty of the silver and gold, they found this more lovely still. The sunlight flickered through, softened by the grateful color, a thousand birds sang among the branches, and the many shades, from the tender shoots of the birch to the dark hues of the fir, gave a charm beyond the others.

Still, without halting, they walked swiftly and warily on, and now through the trees they came in

sight of high walls. On reaching them, they found that they towered above the trees and stretched out of sight on either hand. Smooth and high, they were impossible to scale. The road now ended at the wall, but in the middle was a small door, just large enough to admit a man, locked and fast.

“The griffin key!” said Prince Silver-tongue. Prince Resolute stooped quickly and fitted it to the lock. The door flew open, and the princes stepped within.

They saw but one object. Before them, in the centre of wide-spread, smoothest turf, stood the tree of health, of vivid green, full and vigorous, the reward of their courage and devotion. They hastened to it, and, returning thanks to Heaven for their good fortune, they each broke off a small branch, and then, overawed by the solemn stillness that prevailed, they left the enclosure and stood again in the green wood. They felt now as if all their toils were over, so great was their joy; and they made light of the long way home before them, and the many dangers that still awaited them.

The birds sang more gayly than ever, and when they passed into the gold and silver woods, they kept

with them, flying over their heads, alighting all about and filling the air with their songs, so that the princes could not but see that they rejoiced in their joy.

Thus they travelled on speedily, all the more that they were no longer foot-sore, for the branches they carried healed all wounds. They passed through the districts they had travelled till they came to the country of the griffin, where already a great change had taken place. The houses were open and filled with people, the fields were being ploughed, and on every side there was life and bustle. The people crowded the road to give them welcome, and offered them their country if they would stay and be their protectors, little thinking they were already princes and had their own kingdoms on their hands.

Keeping on without stay, they came in good time to the place where they had found the old woman who had done them such good service by her hints. When they reached it, however, they found the road blocked by a great multitude of armed men, and when they asked for peaceable passage, they were answered rudely, they could have it if they gave up their branches.

The princes, though in ill plight for fight, chose to try their fortune rather than be robbed of the fruit of their long journey, and prepared with their usual courage. But as, with daggers in hand, they advanced, a great tumult arose behind their enemies, causing them to turn to meet it. They soon heard the clang of swords upon shields, and there appeared a great host of knights and soldiers, who, rushing upon the others, overthrew them and speedily drove them back to the mountains.

The princes were surprised at such good fortune, and also at so many soldiers being in that unusual place ; but when they met, they found they were the unfortunate people that filled the tapestry and the living wood. They learned now that he who looked in the magic mirror was either changed to a tree or hung in the tapestry, and that its destruction had restored them all to life.

They were all so grateful to their deliverer that they looked about for some means of serving him, and soon hearing that the people of this wicked country meant to stop the travellers if they succeeded and returned, and steal their branches from them, they lay ready in the woods, prepared to take their part.

So they came at the timely moment, and our princes were saved from a great peril, which I do not think they could have overcome by themselves. These grateful people wanted to follow the princes for fear of further dangers, but the fairies had said they must journey alone, so they separated with many friendly words.

When they came to the hill with the old woman's hut, they climbed up to reward her for her fortunate words. A touch from the branches made her well and whole ; and she told them then that she was once rich and beautiful, but that having warned some of those who were searching for the tree of health, of the snares that lay before them, the enchanters had crippled and deformed her, and stricken her with leprosy, so that she had to go to live alone in the hut on the hill. She was choked by unseen hands if she tried to warn again, and she could only mutter the words they heard, in hopes they would happen to notice them.

Next they reached the rocky path up the Mountains of the Sun, and looked to meet the grim lions ; but none were there. It was still and lonely, and so, steadily ascending, they reached the high wall

of rock that closed the pass. On this side, it was smooth as a wall of glass; no ring hung; no sign of an opening. They stood considering how they could pass, and, if impossible, what road elsewhere there could be. Suddenly Prince Silver-tongue spied a narrow hole, and looking closely they found it was of the shape of a rough key-hole. Joy and hope filled their hearts; they tried the griffin key, and instantly a small door of stone began to slide into the side of the mountain. The key caught in the hole, however, and Prince Resolute was obliged to take the chain quickly from his neck as the door slid in, carrying the key with it. Without delay they passed through, and the door shut as quickly as it opened. What became of the key remains unknown, for now the solid rock stood between them and it, and they had no taste to pull at the bronze ring which they saw still hung in its former place.

They gladly descended the mountains, rejoicing at being in the world again, and out of the enchanted land. They had still the river and the desert before them, and then they would be in their own countries again. The first they did not much fear, but the second they could not cross without food and water;

and unless they found dates they would have no food, and they had nothing to carry water in. But they hoped for the best, and kept up good hearts.

They reached the river and found it so shrunk by the summer heats that they crossed it without trouble, and went gayly on towards the borders of the desert. They passed the rocky interval, they turned the last curve; below lay the green valley of the little river, and lo, upon the banks, banners were waving, tents were pitched, tethered horses were grazing, and before them were all the signs of a royal encampment!

That we may not be lost in the amazement that overtook the princes, we must go back to the little birds set free by them upon the now distant mountains of the enchanted land, at the risk of their own lives. They were, in truth, enchanted birds, and when they saw the princes risk their lives to save theirs, they would not rest till they had returned good for good. So first they flew back with the message of comfort to their mothers, and as the princes had then long been gone, and hope of their return had begun to fade, these messages, perhaps, saved their lives for their sons' return, for they were

becoming very heart-sick, and that is bad for those who are also body-sick. Then the birds kept watch over the progress of the princes, and when they saw them well on their return, and that the desert would be a sore trial at the last, they carried word to the mothers, and each sent a good leader with a thousand horsemen and good store of food, to await her prince on the further border of the desert.

Great was the surprise of the two leaders when they met and greater still when, after their explanations, they found they had come upon the same errand. They agreed to encamp together and await in the same place the return of their princes.

So, each day, from early morn till darkness fell at night, they watched the rocky road, expecting to see appear one or both of their princes, dressed in knightly armor, though perhaps rusty and stained, and riding the gallant horses upon which they had set forth.

We know well how different was their case: how travel-stained and ragged was their dress; how thin and gaunt their bodies; how haggard their faces, worn with want of food and sleep; how tangled their hair and beard, the only covering of their heads, and

now for long exposed to sun and rain. Their leather suits were only kept from falling off by strings of twisted vines, and were full of rents and holes, and their foot covering was the half worn out grass sandals woven by themselves.

So when they appeared at the brow of the hill, pausing to look at the unexpected sight beneath, the watchers doubted whether they were desert robbers, or wandering beggars. As they soon came on, however, they concluded they were the latter, and perhaps might have news of their princes, which brought out the captains to inquire.

The princes, for their part, had already recognized the banners of their own countries, and also some of the soldiers, and came forward joyously, each, however, still ignorant that the other was a prince, or had friends in the gallant company before them.

When they came near, and the captains were about to call in a loud and harsh voice for them to stop, each captain at the same moment discovered the little boughs they carried, and so, being led to look intently at the bearers, each discovered his master in the seeming beggar.

So now behold the captains and their officers

hastening forward and throwing themselves in the dust at the feet of our wayworn travellers !

The princes raised them up and embraced them, and then turned to each other, full of new amazement. "What ! you also a prince ?" each cried, and fell upon each other's necks, overjoyed to find that they were brothers in everything. Each had feared to injure their friendship by telling the other that he was a prince, so each had kept his secret to himself.

When they found their mothers were still alive, and waiting for them with the utmost anxiety, the princes were full of haste to pursue their way.

They were soon bathed, and dressed in princely fashion, and mounted on noble horses ; they smiled to each other at the transformation, for each could scarcely recognize his late companion. But the grace and gentle manners of each were the same under their rags as under cloth of gold, and they said laughingly to each other, "I ought to have known you were a prince, in any clothes !"

In a few hours the tents were struck, the little river deserted, and the horsemen on their march across the desert. Being well provided with everything, they crossed without difficulty, stopping at the desert spring midway.

They separated at the border of the desert, promising lifelong friendship, and each reached his own country to restore his beloved mother to perfect health.

Their mutual promise was well kept, and to the end of their lives the princes remained fast friends and allies, and their people found that each had gained a portion of the other's gift, Prince Silver-tongue being more resolute, and Prince Resolute more ready of speech.

“Splendid!” said Jack; “I mean that part about the griffin.”

“But they ought to have had a scrimmage with the lions,” said Ned; “I like scrimmages.”

SPECKLESIDES.

ONCE there was a little frog, and his name was Specklesides; and as he was hopping along through the grass he said to himself, "I must keep near the river for fear I should meet my enemies," and just as he said that, a great dog rushed barking upon him.

He plunged into the river, and as the current was very strong it soon carried him far away from the shore.

Poor Specklesides! he felt that he should never reach the bank, nor see his pleasant green home again.

But after he had floated down a long way, he came to a little island, where the sticks and stones that were brought down by the current had lodged, and he hopped on to it and began to look about him.

Presently he saw a pretty little fat frog, all green. So he went to her and asked if she would come and be his little wife. She said, "Yes, as she didn't see anybody else."

Then said Specklesides, "Let us jump into the water and make our backs all shiny, and then the flies will light upon us." So they jumped into the water, and when they came out and sat on the bank, the flies lighted on their shiny backs, and they eat the flies and had a very nice supper.

Then Specklesides said, "Now we must find a hole to live in." So he looked about, and presently came to an old tree with a large hole in it. There was some dust in it, but he and his little green wife cleared it out and put fresh leaves in, and then they went to sleep.

And there they lived for a long time, until at last the weather began to be cold, and when the wind blew, little Mrs. Specklesides said, "O, what shall we do when winter comes, and we have no flies to eat?"

Specklesides said: "What did we do last winter? I can't think what we did; let us sit down in our warm hole and try to remember."

So they leaned against each other, and while trying to remember, they fell fast asleep, and slept till the winter was over and the warm summer wind was blowing again. Specklesides awoke first, and looked about him and said, "Why, it's summer, and I do believe we've slept all winter!"

“That story is for Hilda,” cried all; “she likes frogs.”

“Well, if I do,” said three-year-old, “I don’t put ’em in my bed, as you did your turtle, Jack.”



BLACK SNEID.

ON a coast of Africa called Zanzibar, there was once a boy of the name of Sneid, as black as a piece of charcoal, and as mischievous as any ten white boys rolled into one. The family lived in a palm-tree grove, with a palm-leaf shed backed up against a rock on one side, and a brook of clear water from the hills on the other.

Sneid could climb like a monkey, and run like an ostrich, and these two accomplishments saved him from a good many whippings. For he always had some piece of mischief to atone for, and a good acacia stick, with the thorns on, stood ready at all times for use on his tough little back, when he could be caught.

At last every one began to get tired of him. The family toes had been tied together in their sleep, the donkey pads had been stuck with thorns, salt water, instead of fresh, put in the coffee-pot; all once too often: and this family of black folks made up their minds to sell him and get rid of him. A stout

old uncle who lived in a neighboring grove, and who thought it possibly a little discreditable to sell one's near relation, called to discuss the matter, and a family council was held, upon which Sneid looked down from a lofty palm-tree, where he had been sent to pick cocoa-nuts, and to be out of the way.

The old blackey was arguing Sneid's case with great gesture and grimace, when plump came a small cocoa-nut down from on high, and striking his woolly head pitched him into the middle of the circle on his nose. It was of course Sneid's work, who could not withstand the temptation of his venerable relative's convenient situation, right beneath him. This convincing proof of his unfitness for civilized life settled his fate, and the next morning an Arab slave-ship happening to come coasting along, he was sold for a measure of coffee beans, and carried off, never to be seen by his affectionate family again.

The little ship went coasting along, picking up likely slaves here and there, and Sneid now found out what hard work was, and how very little a black boy could live on. He had soon attracted unfavorable attention by trying, when no one was looking, to cut the halyards of the mainsail with a sharpened

piece of iron, and his masters after that kept him out of mischief by keeping him at the oar. As for food, it looked as if they meant to try the experiment of his living on a date a day, they brought his allowance so low.

The small bark, nothing more than a large boat, was beginning to be crowded, when one afternoon, as they were coasting along the shore of a desert-looking island, a violent storm came up, and they were in great danger of foundering. The slaves were set to work bailing, and all was in confusion, when Sneid, who could swim like a frog, slipped overboard and took his chance with the waves. Nobody even observed him, and after a hard struggle, and with a good deal of salt water in him, he reached the shore, quite exhausted. He lay on the sand till morning, and then began to look about for something to eat and drink. He had evidently come to a bad place for that. On all sides was sand, — nothing but sand. It ran up into hills inland, it bordered the blue sea as far as he could look on either hand. He climbed to the top of a hill with some difficulty, for tough as he naturally was, he was reduced to weakness by starvation. When he got there he was re-

warded by the sight of waving tops of trees, apparently growing in a hollow or valley among the hills.

He staggered and crept along, with just enough strength in him to reach the side of the pool that filled the bottom of the hollow and gave life to the grove of trees that surrounded it.

Water was plenty, and a broken cocoa-nut, only half eaten, lay upon the bank, and that was quite enough to bring Sneid's hardy little body round again. He looked about and found that though the grove was small, there were both cocoa-nut and date palms, and plenty of fruit upon them. He had just concluded that there was no one to eat it but him, when he saw a large white monkey sitting among the branches, watching him. The monkey looked at Sneid and Sneid looked at the monkey for some time, when the last got slowly down, and walking up put some dates on the bank beside Sneid, without any other sign of friendliness. He sat himself a little way off, with a very composed face, while Sneid eat the dates. Sneid had never seen a white monkey, and, as he eat, he was wondering how such a white hide felt to the wearer.

After a while, the monkey came nearer and began

to stroke Sneid's back, and they were soon sitting side by side, each making the most of his new acquaintance.

Sneid quickly recovered his strength and activity under the easy circumstances he was now in. He found the white monkey very friendly, and sensible too, as far as he could judge by actions, for he could not speak a word. They went together over the island, which proved to be half of sand and half of steep and jagged rocks, without water or plant except in this hollow, which, having a bottom of clay, held the rain-water, and so gave nourishment to vegetation.

This friendship continued unchecked until one hot noon, when the monkey was taking a nap, Sneid, the while, sitting idle by and wishing there was something to do. He had not satisfied his curiosity upon the subject of the monkey's white hide, and now he wondered whether his blood was red, and whether, indeed, he had any. A large thorn lay convenient, and Sneid began to experiment by thrusting the thorn into his thigh.

There was blood, certainly, and plenty of it, and it was red too ; but Sneid had very little time to think

about it, for the monkey, jumping hastily up, seized him in his strong arms and carried him up on a high rock, so smooth and so steep that Sneid couldn't get down, and there he left him in the sun on a little point just large enough to sit on, for two whole days and nights without anything to eat or drink.

The poor little blackey nearly died, but it was a very good thing for him. For, when the monkey brought him down again, quite senseless, and poured some water down his throat and got his eyes open, Sneid considered, and made up his mind not to prick any one ever again.

So he and the monkey lived together like two friends a long while, and little by little, and with great pains, the monkey learned to talk after a fashion, which was a great comfort to both, and Sneid found that his white friend was very clever, and knew a great deal that had not been learned on that island. He would not say a word, however, of what had happened to him elsewhere, or how he came there, though he listened to Sneid's account of himself with interest. Sneid, who had a lively imagination, of course made himself out to be the son of a king who had been stripped by his brothers and sold into

slavery on account of his many virtues. The white monkey winked hard during the story, but Sneid couldn't tell whether it was to keep his tears back, or because he was sleepy.

How long they would have gone on contentedly in this lonely place, it is difficult to say. But before they had become discontented they were forced to leave it in such a sudden manner that their very dinner, plucked in the morning to save work in the hot noon, remained to spoil or be eaten by the ants.

They were on the shore looking for shell-fish, when a row-boat, full of black thieves, came round the point, pounced upon them unawares, tied their hands, and carried them clean away.

After two or three days in the boat where they were well kicked and cuffed and fed short, they came to land at the castle of a grisly old giant, who was a magician as well. Here they were sold to the giant's butler, who was constantly needing new hands, so many were killed off by hard work and cruel treatment.

The white monkey, who now pretended he could not talk, was put into the garden to work, and Sneid

was made house boy, and had to carry water and clean the rooms.

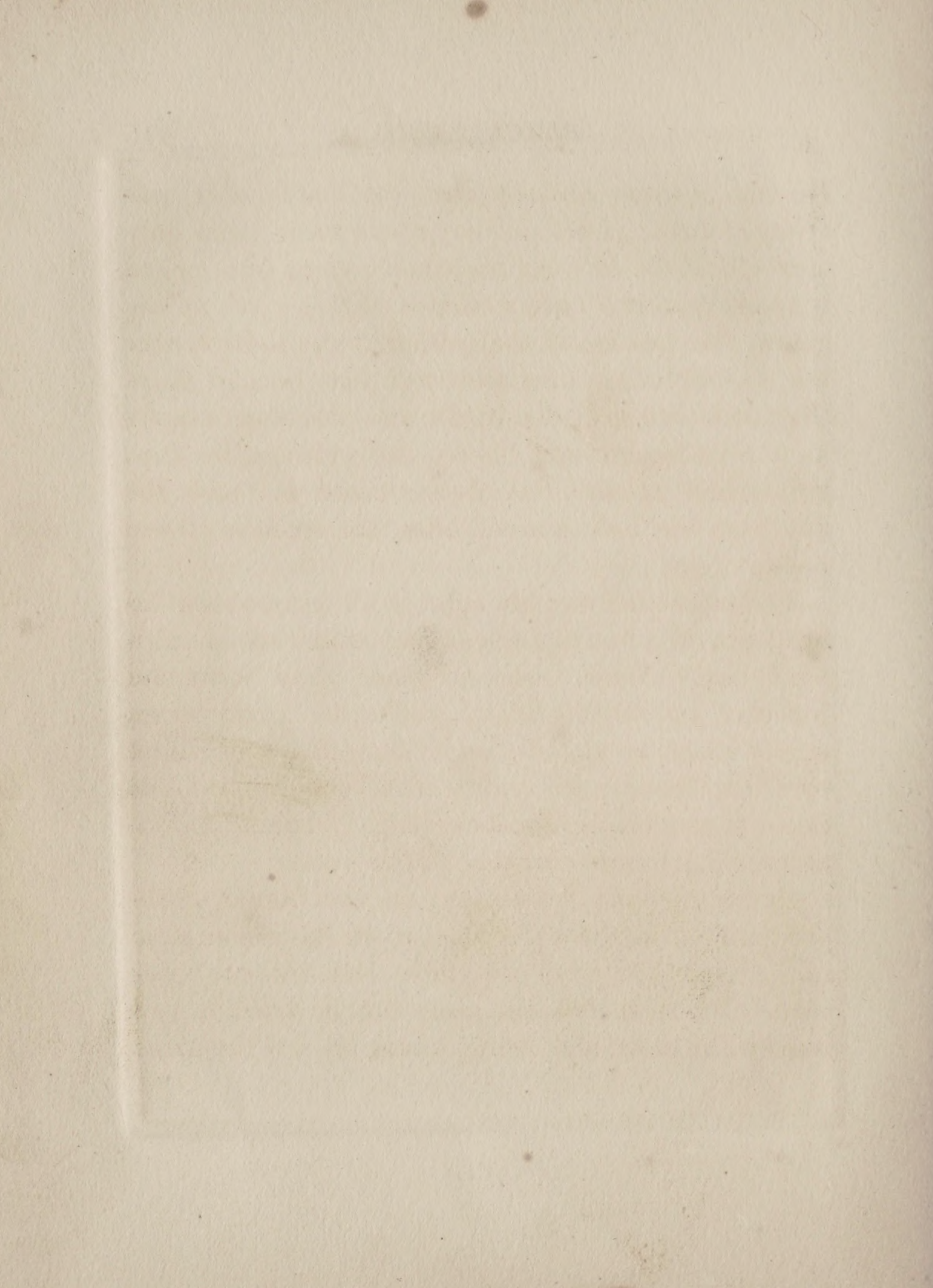
Now this disagreeable giant had, locked up in a stone room in his castle, a beautiful princess whom he had stolen away from her father's house in Circassia.

Sneid had to carry water to her chamber, and even the white monkey had not been such a surprise to him, as this red and white beauty was when he saw her. It was an astonishment to find there were white monkeys. It was a still greater to find there were white men and women.

He soon knew all about her, for the princess told him the whole story, which he, in turn, told at night to his friend, the white monkey, for they slept together in a dog-kennel. They wanted very much to help the princess, but it was a difficult matter for any one, for this giant not only had a strong castle with high walls, but no one knew the secret of his locks, and he always kept his keys himself. Besides that, he had the winds in his service, and they had to go where he liked, and if any one ran away he was sure to be caught.

The white monkey put one finger on the side of his nose, which was his way when he considered.





He had already noticed that the stable door was always locked, and that the groom went there only once a day, for an hour, and then coming out, locked it again, and the butler carried the key up to the giant. He had asked the gardener why their master was so careful, and he answered that he had there the fastest horse in the world, and therefore always kept him locked up. As for the princess, he kept her locked up also, but always came and took the key from the lock himself, after the room had been put in order.

The white monkey thought it all over, shook his head gravely, but told Sneid they would see about it next day. When morning came they went out together, and the monkey picked up two small stones, one of which he gave to Sneid, and one he put in his own ear, having no other place for it. He told Sneid to put his in the lock of the princess' door as he passed through, carrying in the water.

As for his own, he worked on the border of the garden next to the stable, and when the groom went in, he slipped it into the stable lock without being seen. When the groom came out he tried in vain to lock the door, and being afraid to tell the giant,

he withdrew the key, leaving the door unlocked but shut, and sent it as usual up to his master.

He, also, could not lock the door of the princess' room when the time came, but after fuming and foaming for awhile, and threatening to burn every one alive, he put his boot-jack against it, which barked like a dog if anything disturbed it, and went off.

When night came, and all was dark and quiet, the princess, who had been warned by Sneid, put on her bonnet and gloves, took her little bag, and sat ready for a journey. The monkey brought the horse out, all saddled and bridled, through the open stable door, while Sneid crept up-stairs to open that of the princess. But when he saw the boot-jack he did not know what to do, for, if he made it bark it would wake the giant. So he went down again to consult his friend, the white monkey. He advised his trying his finger in the notch of the boot-jack where the boot goes, and the boot-jack would think it was his master's boot and would shut the notch, and so would not bark.

“But you must not cry out,” said he, “no matter how much it hurts, until the princess gets down-stairs. Then you can, and he will let go, and you must run or you will be left behind.”

So Sneid did, and when he put his finger in the notch, O, how the boot-jack gripped him! But no sound did he make, only pushed the door open, and the beautiful princess started up, ran quickly down stairs, and jumped on the white horse.

“Let go!” screamed Sneid, for his finger was nearly pinched off.

“Bow-wow!” went the boot-jack at once, as loud as a cannon.

Sneid scrambled down stairs, for the giant came rushing from his chamber, and in a moment they were all on the white horse and riding for life. The giant raved and stormed about, you may be sure, but it took a little time to discover how they had got off, before he let loose the winds to catch them.

The horse ran so fast they could neither breathe nor see, but they heard a great noise behind, for the winds were coming, so many and so strong, that they blew everything to pieces as they went along. But before they could be caught, or were dead for want of breath, they passed out of the giant's country and were safe.

The king was so glad to get his beautiful daughter again, that he gave the white monkey a nice house and garden all to himself.

Sneid's finger came off, it had been so badly nipped, so the king gave him a gold finger, and another nice house and garden, all to himself.

And they lived happily all their lives, for Sneid, having found how disagreeable it was to be hurt, never hurt any one again.

“ Which do they think handsomest in the black country,” asked Ethel ; “ black or white ? ”

“ Black, I suppose ; that is, a handsome black.”

“ Then why didn't the giant carry off a black princess ? ”

LITTLE CURLY.

ONCE in fairy times there lived a little girl named Curly, because her hair curled so nicely; and she was blue-eyed and golden-haired.

She lived with her father and mother near the sea-shore, and her father built ships. Not far off there was another house, and in that were an old woman and a donkey, about whom no one knew anything, except that they were very much away from home. Now, in truth, this old woman was a naughty fairy, who caught all the boys and girls she could, turned them into sea-gulls, and sent them to live on a rock, way off in the ocean, where they had to lay eggs, and every egg had a great diamond in it.

But the old fairy could not catch any one who did not come to her of their own accord; and though she had often asked Curly if she wouldn't have a ride on her donkey, Curly said "No," and ran away, for the old creature was ugly and cross-looking, and besides, Curly's mother had told her not to go to her.



But many were the little boys and girls she had caught, by means of her donkey, in other places, and a sad time they were having, off there on the lonely rock, ever so many thousand miles away.

At last one day, when Curly was picking cowslips in the meadow, she looked up and saw the old fairy. "Come, child," says she, "and have a ride on the nice donkey." Curly immediately turned to run home. "And have some stuffed cakes," said the old woman. Now Curly liked stuffed cakes rather too much, and when she heard that, she stopped to consider. The end of it was, in a little while she was riding along on the donkey to the old woman's house.

Very naughty, wasn't it, when her mother had told her never to go there. The cakes were very nice, but while she was eating, the wicked old woman slipped a white feather into her ear, and the next second there was a white gull, and little Curly was gone altogether.

In her fright she flew into the air, and immediately a fierce hawk began to follow her, and drove her away from the green land, away, away, across the sea, until she was glad to rest on the rock of diamonds.

There she found many other gulls, white, black, and brown, but they could not talk with each other. They could only scream and twitter, and it was a very cold and miserable place, after the nice green land.

Curly's mamma and papa soon missed her, and looked through the fields and woods in vain.

Then they began to fear the old fairy had caught her, but there was no use asking her. She would only call them bad names.

So in their distress they remembered a good fairy who lived on a mountain a long way off, and was always ready to help good people. The builder put on his best shirt and shoes and hat, and hurried off with a piece of bread and an apple in his pocket, lest he should get hungry on the way. He had a long way to go, and by night he was hungry and eat his bread. But he walked on all night and when morning came he was more hungry still, and pulled out his apple.

Just then he saw a poor little crooked old man sitting on a bank by the road-side, and because he had a very kind heart, when he found the old man had had no dinner for three days, he gave him the



apple, and went on hungry. At noon he reached the fairy on the mountain.

When she heard his story she considered awhile; then she brought him a little arrow trimmed with green feathers. "Curly is somewhere on the sea," said she; "where, I don't know: but build a ship without a cross word, put this arrow on the bow, and sail where it points. It will carry you where she is. Then you must yourself find her and catch her, and when you have her, to come back will be harder than to go. That's all the help any fairy can give you."

After this long answer, not another word would she say to the poor papa.

He took the arrow with a sad heart, for how could he build a ship soon enough, and that without a cross word? for the workmen were rude and quarrelsome, and many were the hard words given over the littlest boat they ever built. He travelled along very tired, chewing leaves and roots to stop his hunger, for he had nothing to eat. Half way home he came to an old woman who had fallen and sprained her ankle.

"Ah," she cried, "how shall I ever get home to my little grandchildren! and without me they will

die !” Tired as the good builder was, he took her up on his back, and lugged her many a weary mile, until at last he put her down at her own door. “ Good man,” said she, “ I haven’t much to give you, but here’s a little box that may serve you some day.”

He thanked her, but when he looked in the box and found only a grain of barley, he laughed and thought it would never serve him much. However, he screwed on the top, and carried it home to his wife.

Before night, he went to his ship-yard, tired as he was, and laid down the keel for a little ship, and then returned home to bed, thinking that he would build her all himself, that there might be no cross words.

In the morning, when he came with his axe and saw, behold, there was the little ship half built, and the little crooked man that had eaten his apple, hard at work !

The good builder saw at once it was one of the wood-men, come to help him, so he said no word, but took off his coat, and went to work. Never before did a little ship grow so fast, and when night came she was all finished, tight and trig, with masts and



yards and ropes and sails. Before he could be thanked the wood-man was gone, but the builder never forgot to thank him night and morning, for the rest of his life.

The next day he hired some sailors, launched the ship into the water, fastened the arrow on the bow, bid good-by to his wife, who kissed him many times and cried very much to think she also could not go to find poor little Curly, and then away they sailed out of sight of land.

They sailed and they sailed, days and nights, and the arrow turned on the bow if they went wrong, and at last, one bright morning, they came to the lonely rock, with sea-gulls flying about it, and the sea dashing against its foot.

Then the small boat was lowered into the water, and Curly's papa went ashore.

He found the rock covered with eggs, but he looked in vain for Curly. She was not in any nook or cavern, and when he called no voice answered. Only, all the time, the gulls circled about his head, and screamed, and fluttered.

At last, one snow-white gull flew suddenly down upon his shoulder, and then nestled in his breast;

and then he knew that must be Curly. And when he looked at her closely he found a little circle of curly feathers round her neck.

Meantime the sailors had broken the eggs and found a diamond in each, and were very glad. But the builder said they were witches' diamonds, and they had better have none of them. But the foolish sailors loaded their pockets with them.

Then the builder called aloud to the sea-gulls that all could come that liked, with the ship, and they flew in a great cloud and settled on the masts and spars. But the builder was so afraid of losing Curly, that he made a strong cage, and kept her in the cabin all the time. And then they tried to sail home.

But now came great storms, and they were blown hither and thither, for the old fairy knew that all her birds were with the ship, and she wanted to sink it with all the people, and then the birds would have to go back to the rock. Every day the good builder fed the birds, which the sailors did not like, for they feared by and by there would not be enough food for them. So they wanted to shoot the birds, for all they cared for was to get home with their diamonds.

But the builder would not let any bird be shot or driven away. He felt sure they were all little boys and girls like Curly.

So they sailed on, always getting nearer home, though the storms tossed them about.

Now the old fairy had made a great whirlpool in the sea, hoping to catch the ship in it and sink her, and they were sailing towards it, and began to hear a great roar like much water falling. And the ship was drawn by the water faster and faster to the whirlpool, and there was no wind to help them away. And now it seemed as if they must be swallowed up.

But suddenly the gulls all rose into the air, and spreading their great wings they seized on the ropes with their bills, and flew, and pulled, and turned the ship, and then, being many thousands, they at last towed her quite away into the safe ocean again. But they had to fly so hard they were nearly dead with exertion, and for several days lay about the deck as if they could never fly again.

Then came a pleasant wind, and they sailed on.

By and by one dark night, all saw a light ahead, and then the captain and sailors cried for joy, for they said, "That is the light-house on our own land,

and now we shall soon be safe at home !” But in truth it was a great flame made by the cruel fairy on a rock on purpose that the sailors might mistake it for their light, and so run the ship on the rocks.

The sea-gulls, with their bright eyes, saw what it was, but how could they tell the captain, for they could not speak. They fluttered and twittered, and at last they all rose up from the ship, one great gray cloud of flapping wings, and flying to the flame, they flew against it and brushed it out with their breasts.

Then the sailors could no more see the light, and they knew then it was not their light-house, which never went out ; so they turned on one side and were saved.

But the cruel old fairy was not done yet. When the ship had come within one hundred miles of home, she placed some rocks under the water, just so they could not be seen. And that time the sea-gulls could not see either, for the blue and smooth sea covered these rocks.

And so as they were sailing prosperously along, suddenly, without warning, the good ship struck hard against the sharp rocks, and a hole was made, and the water rushed in and she sank.

The good builder had time to take Curly out of the cage, and having tied a string to her leg, he fastened her to his own neck so that she could sit on his shoulder; and by that time the ship sank so fast, he was in the water. The sailors also, having first put their diamonds in their pockets, were in the water; but alas! the diamonds, being witches' diamonds, were heavier than millstones, and they were all drowned.

The builder would have been drowned, too, for it was a hundred miles from land, and no man can swim a hundred miles unhelped. But now the sea-gulls helped him. They flew over his head and fastened their feet in his hair and held him up, changing with each other. As they came near the land, the fairy sent out her fierce hawk, for if she could drown that good builder, she would be glad, and would have all her sea-gulls back again, though they did not know that. They only wanted to save him who had been so kind to them.

So when the fierce hawk swooped down to strike him, hoping to tear out his eyes and kill him, the birds flew above his head in a compact and solid mass, through which he could not penetrate. He

tore their backs and broke their feathers, and their blood fell into the sea, but they would not open or give way, and flew on and on, always holding up the poor, hard-pressed builder, so that he could keep his chin above water and swim on. Little Curly would have helped, too, but she was tied and could only sit still on her papa's shoulder.

At last his feet touched the solid ground, and he was safe.

No sooner were they ashore, than behold, all the gulls turned again into little boys and girls, just as they were when the wicked old fairy beguiled them away, all except Curly, who, poor thing, sat on her papa's shoulder, only a little white sea-gull still. The little boys and girls were in great haste to run home to their fathers and mothers, but they stayed to thank the good builder first, and to stroke and caress poor little Curly, and then they were off, each to his home, wondering, as they ran, why little Curly could not be changed back also.

Our poor tired builder hurried home too, and his wife, who had sat always by the window looking for him, was so glad to see him that she cried now for joy. But she cried still more when she found her

little Curly was only a white sea-gull. They made a little warm nest for her, and put a basket up the chimney, and shut all the doors and windows, that the cruel hawk might not get in and carry her off.

When the morning came, lo, there was a nice little egg in Curly's nest! But that only made the poor mother more sorry than ever.

"What," she said, "is my little girl never to be anything else than a bird, and lay eggs?"

Then they sent off a message to the good fairy on the mountain, to ask what they could do, and why Curly was not changed back like the others.

But the good fairy said that only good deeds could change her back, and that the other sea-gulls had their deliverance for their three good acts; first, when they broke their bills pulling the ship from the whirlpool; second, when they burnt themselves in the fire; and third, when they bore the cruel strokes of the hawk; all to save their friend, and without knowing they were helping themselves.

Then they considered how they could do good deeds.

But they could not go out, for there was the great hawk always watching for a chance to seize poor

Curly, and neither her papa nor mamma dared to leave her.

And so the days passed on, and every day Curly laid a little white egg, and her mother put them away in a dark closet, because she could not bear to see them.

At last they had eaten up all their food. First the meat went, then the bread, then the potatoes. Then they found there was nothing left, and they were afraid to go out. It seemed as if they must all die together. They grew more and more hungry, and now they had been three days without any food at all. Little Curly lay on her side, with her eyes half closed, and her papa and mamma could no longer get up from the bed, except to crawl along the floor.

Just at the third day the good builder, looking round the room, as he thought, for the last time, saw on the shelf the little box from the old woman. "Ah," he thought, "there's a grain of barley; I will give it to Curly."

So he crawled across the room, opened the box, and took out the grain of barley. Lo, in his hand it swelled into a beautiful barley cake as large as one's



fist. "Wife," he cried, and hastened to feed her. But she said quickly, "You and Curly," and shook her head and shut her teeth tight, and would by no means take any. Then he broke off a crumb and would have fed Curly, but she closed her little bill, and would sooner die than be fed, when her dear mamma was dying of hunger.

So, finding neither would eat, he put the beautiful cake on the table, and said, "We will all die together then." Immediately the cake sank again into the grain of barley. Then the good builder understood. With a cry of joy he caught up the grain, and opening Curly's bill by force, popped it in, and — their own little maiden stood there before them!

Little Curly lost no time. She opened the door, no longer afraid of the great hawk, and in ever so few minutes she was out and back again with her apron full of blackberries and wild raspberries, and they soon brought her mamma and papa round to life. Then she hurried to the next house and got bread and milk, and by night they were all strong enough to hug and kiss each other, and talk over all that had happened, and be as happy as such good people deserved.

But as they got over their first happiness, they began to find themselves very poor. While Curly's papa was away on the sea, other builders of ships had come, and he could now get no work to do. Then all the money they had had before, had been spent in buying things for the ship that was lost.

So Curly picked berries, and her mother went out and washed, and her father cut wood in the forest; but they all together got very little to eat.

One evening as Curly was rummaging in the closets in the wall, she came on a whole heap of little white eggs. "See, mamma," she cried, "these nice eggs; why don't you cook them for supper." For she knew nothing of what she did and what happened to her when she was a little sea-gull. "O," said her mother, "perhaps they are mice's eggs, and you must not touch them." But just then one rolled from the heap and, falling on the floor, broke, and out fell a brilliant diamond!

At first they could not believe their eyes, but when they broke the other eggs, one after the other, and each held another and another, then there was joy and happiness, you may believe.

Now their troubles were over. They sold the

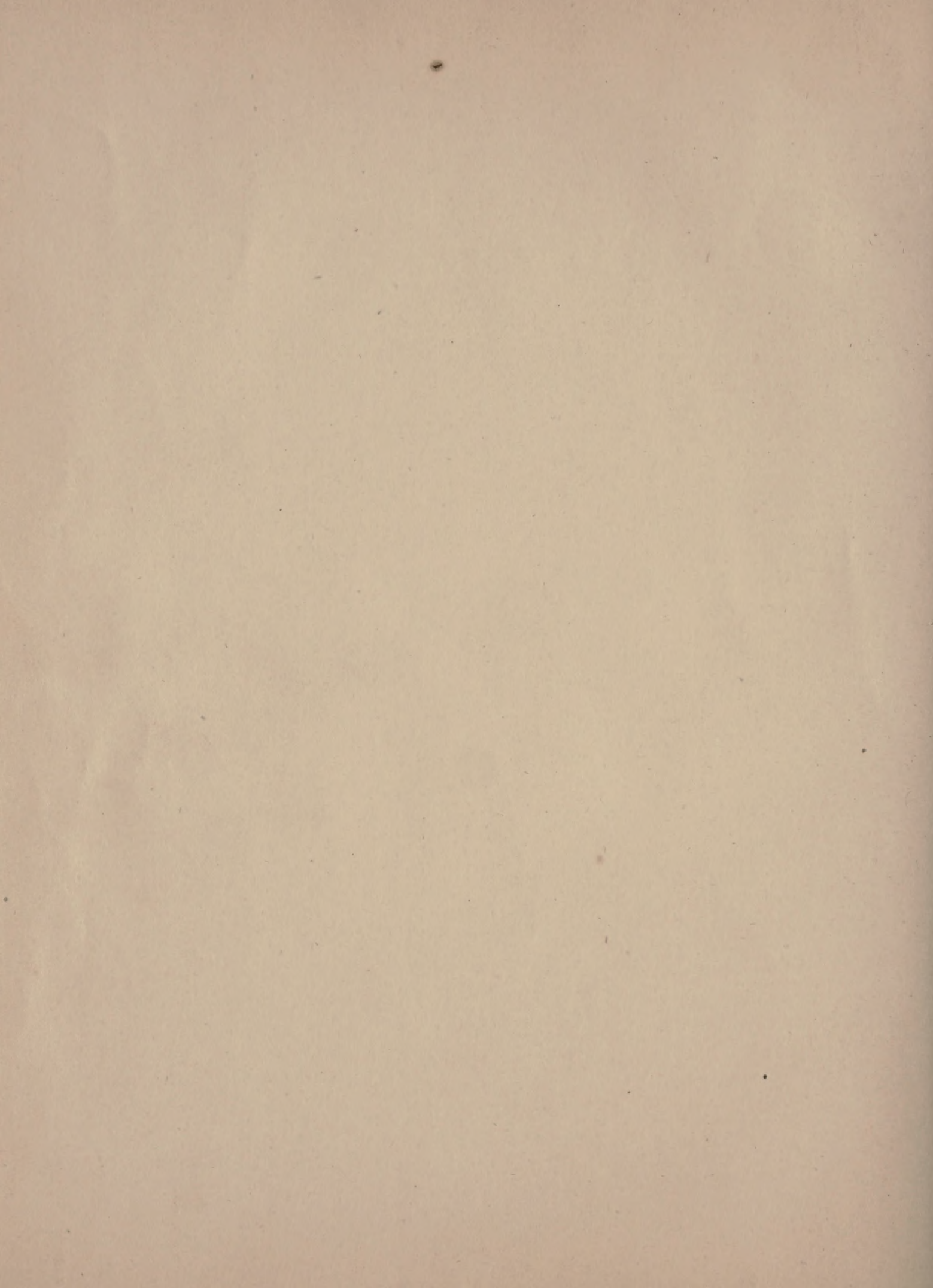
diamonds one by one, and when they were all sold there was so much money that it could not be counted.

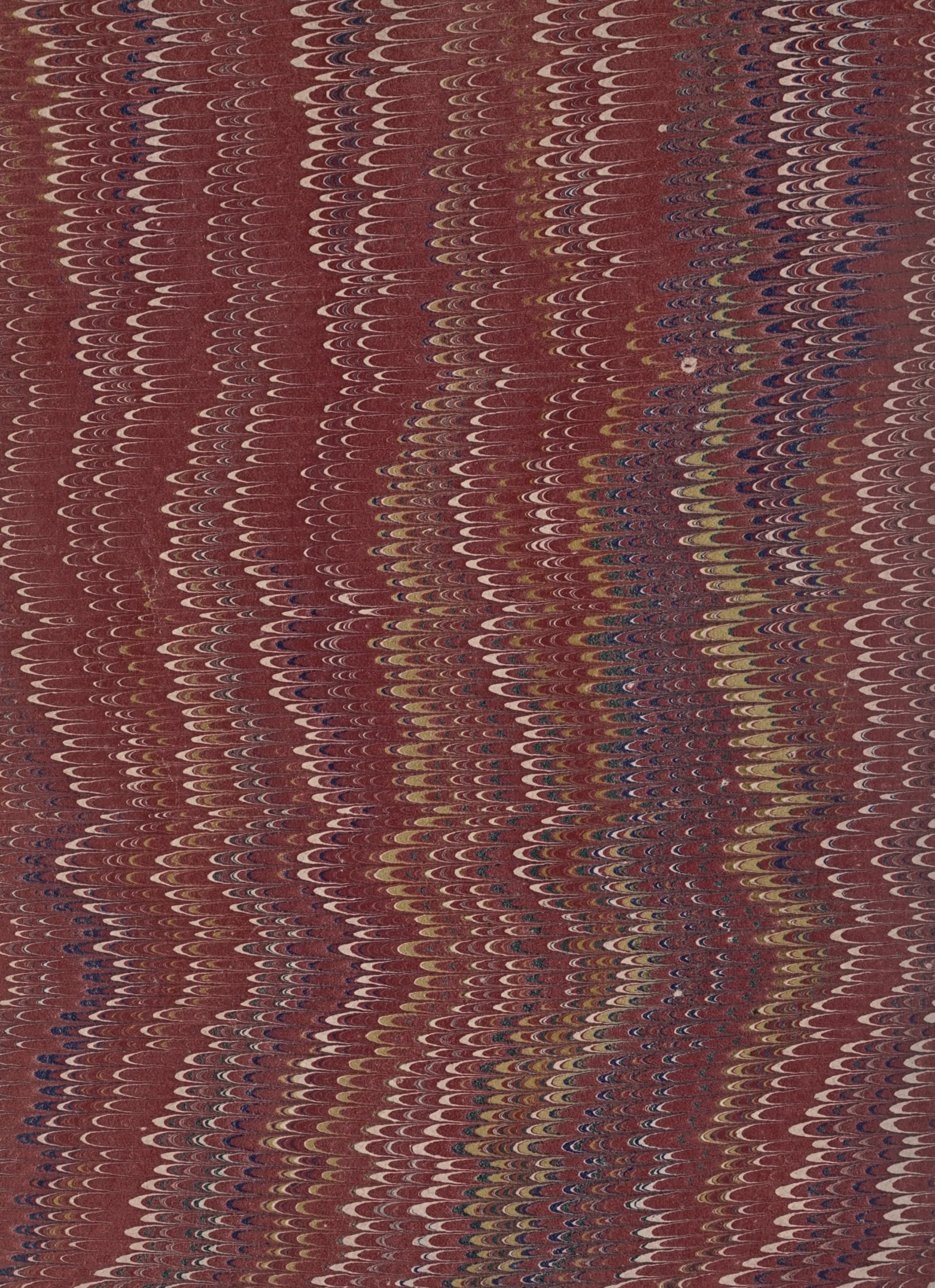
They had a nice, pleasant house and garden, and horses, and cows, and sheep, and what they liked better than all, they always had something for the poor travellers.

And so, after all, it turned out very well that little Curly became a sea-gull. But if the good builder and his wife had not been so kind to all they met, all the more when poor, ragged, and miserable, and if they had eaten up the cake when so hungry, instead of each trying to make the others eat, then, perhaps, it would not have turned out so well.

“There isn’t any fighting in that story,” says Jack; “you ought to tell another.”

“O, it is better than fighting, ever so much, and Curly is the greatest darling of them all!” cry all the girls in chorus.







SEVEN AUTUMN LEAVES

FROM

FAIRY TALES

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